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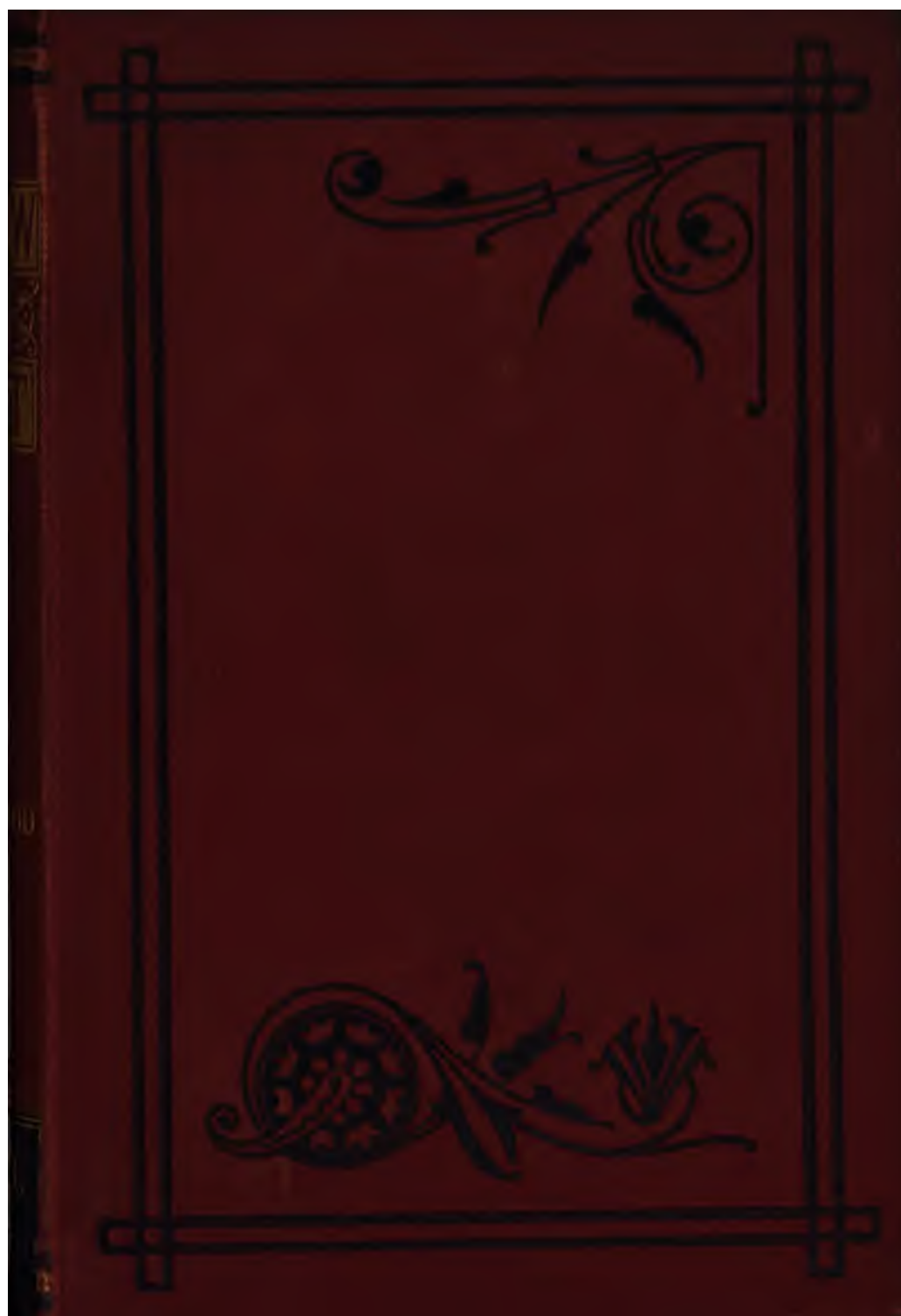
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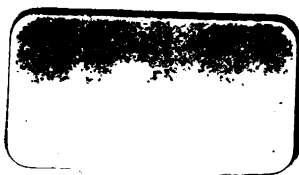
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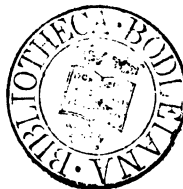
BELOW THE SALT.

A Novel.

BY
LADY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF
"ROSEWABN," "SABINA," "ON CREDIT," "WILD WEATHER,"
"RULING THE ROAST," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.



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BELOW THE SALT.

CHAPTER I.

“Lo ! this man’s visage, like a title page,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.”

PRESENTLY the conviction strengthened to each woman that the person was a naval officer unknown to them, and that he was coming to their residence. With open lips, to try to breathe more freely, they both watched the unfamiliar figure. Mrs. Heathdale, with a face like ashes, grey and colourless, came down to the small drawing-room to hear her fate.

There was a ring at the bell ; they heard Sally’s tardy preparations for answering it—the pulling out of the dresser drawer for the clean white apron.

"Let *me* go," cried Pleasance, impetuously, but as she spoke the front door was opened, and they heard the footstep of the maid on the stairs, bringing the gentleman's card, "Captain Malcolm, R.N., H.M.S. 'Isis.'"

Mrs. Heathdale signed that he was to be admitted. He was already on the threshold. He was a man whose face had never blanched in battle or shipwreck, but it was now corpse-like in its paleness.

"I believe I am in the presence of Mrs. Heathdale; and—can it be——"

Pleasance signed assent.

"Of Mrs. Petrel? It is most miserable to me to come on such an errand."

"Oh!" cried the poor mother, with one bitter cry, "Edward is dead!" and she flung her head on to the outstretched arms which were laid along the table, and gave no other token of the pang which had severed the dearest tie which bound her to life.

"Is Edgar—is Midshipman Petrel dead too?" asked Pleasance, with frightful composure.

"He is, my dear young lady; I feel for

you both. This poor widow lady is your mother, I suppose?"

"My mother in affection," replied the girl. "Oh, sir! how could you let them die? How could such a fate reach them in that noble ship? My poor, poor Edgar!" and she wept bitterly.

Captain Malcolm walked to the window, turning his back on the ladies, and wiped his face with his bandana handkerchief.

"I knew they were dead!" cried Pleasance, in a rage of grief and despair. "When those strange faces looked over the side of the vessel, I knew my Edgar was not alive, or he would have been watching for my coming, as for hours I had watched for his."

Mrs. Heathdale lifted her ghastly face, now fixed in the calm of a sorrow which even time could never lessen in this world. "Tell us, Captain Malcolm, if you please——"

Here her voice failed her, and the captain began to speak eagerly.

"They were friends; they were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths were not divided. Two of the best officers that ever trod the deck of the 'Isis,' or any other ship

of war. It was in the Bay of Biscay; the weather was stormy, the waves like mountains of yeast, the sky thick with mist; it was getting dark. The man on the look-out reported a vessel foundering in the offing. She was flying signals of distress and firing minute guns. Her crew and passengers were crowding the deck and clinging to the masts. The state of the weather made it impossible to *order* a boat to go to their assistance, but I told my crew that if any officer and men volunteered, they might take the long boat and try to save as many as they could. Lieutenant Heathdale and Midshipman Petrel came forward at once. Heathdale cried aloud for volunteers, but there was a deep silence. At length three men from the maintop sang out, 'Anywhere with you, sir.' They hoisted out the long boat. The two young officers looked at the distant vessel, then at the smoking sea, through which their course must be steered, and they turned and shook hands before they sprang into the boat. We watched that gallant little crew with throbbing hearts till she was out of sight, for evening was increasing the gloom of the sea

and sky, and the ship herself was one black undistinguishable blot on the white waves. We held our breath with anxiety for the next ten minutes, when we saw the boat returning crowded with miserable wretches redeemed from death by our officers and seamen. Then such a shout went up to Heaven of such glad acclamation from our sailors and officers, as must have thrilled the brave hearts whom it was intended to honour. They reached the ship's side; the shipwrecked men were placed on board. 'Come on board, gentlemen,' I cried. Lieutenant Heathdale shouted through the roar of the blast, 'There are many more left; we must return for them.'—'No, no,' I cried.—'Captain, I have *promised*,' he shouted.—'Go, then, and may God prosper you,' I answered through the trumpet. They went and returned, and went again. We were more hopeful; they had done it twice with safety, why not a third time? Once more we watched them through the surf; now topping the billows, now lost to sight in the trough of waves, then all was indistinct and night fell on the scene, but lights were burning to guide them back.

There were none in the doomed vessel. We watched, we shouted, but no answer came on the blast over the waves. The wind had freshened at night, but when the sun rose the sea was comparatively smooth, and its level rays shone over a world of barren waters. Towards evening a solitary object was descried. A boat was sent towards it, and returned towing the long boat, which was floating keel uppermost.

“Madam, death must come to us all. Could your son, and your husband, my dear young lady, have died more nobly? They died for others in the prime of their youth and strength. This is better than to linger on earth for the fourscore years which are but labour and sorrow and utter helplessness of mind and body.

“These men were an example of steadiness and well doing in their lives, and of disinterested self-sacrifice in their deaths. They are hallowed in the memories of their shipmates for their undaunted courage, as shown both in the tenor of their lives and the manner of their deaths. Believe me, ladies, there are bitterer things than the death of those we

love. I have had young men in my ship who have brought disgrace on their kindred."

"Disgrace never could have attached to the name of Heathdale," said the widow, putting aside the consolation offered. "I thank you, sir, you have been very kind. We will not trouble you further; you cannot give us back our dead. We must bear our hard lot as we can."

She rose and stood up, very pale and composed. A new trouble seemed to strike Pleasance, a fresh agony of conviction.

"Oh! I do not know where his dear body is carried about on the wicked waves. Dashed and hurt against the rocks, never to be laid on holy ground. I cannot, cannot bear it!" and she flung herself on the ground, clenching her fingers in her luxuriant hair, as if she would pull out handfuls.

Captain Malcolm raised her.

"Poor girl!" he cried. "She is young to have such grief to bear. There are the poor young fellows' effects, madam—their sea-chests. I will send them here."

Thus saying he tendered his hand to the elder lady; and finding Pleasance utterly in-

capable of replying to his leave-taking, he departed.

The blow was greatest to Mrs. Heathdale. She felt it to be so ; but the young can never believe that the sufferings they endure are not the most poignant ever before experienced by humanity.

Mrs. Heathdale had before lost the partner of her life, and the creature most bound to love and cherish her. Her son grew up, and took his father's place in devotion to her welfare. She was his one thought, for whose sake he forbade his eyes and his inclinations from resting on the fair creatures on shore, who seemed angelic, and whom he would have liked to worship. He was taken from her ; and, though in the first anguish of her grief it did not strike her, she had lost, in losing him, a great source of pecuniary comfort. It could not be helped. She trusted she should not live long, for life was as a rose from which the blossoms had been riven, and the thorns strengthened.

She had that quiet sublimity of grief which could accept of no consolation, and which desired none. I question if she understood

what was said to her on the subject. It was an incongruous noise, like the soundings of brass and the tinkling of cymbals. An awful carelessness of life, and of all but the troubled deep of sorrow within her, brooded over her existence; yet she never swerved from her duty to Pleasance and her child. Poor Pleasance! But to be consoled by the possession of Pleasance, would have been as if one sheltered under a majestic oak should have found comfort under its destruction by cherishing a knot of primroses which clustered amongst the spreading roots.

When Captain Malcolm had departed, Pleasance heard a cry from little Margaret in the nursery; and on ascending thither she discovered that it had arisen from a difference of opinion between Sally and the child, who insisted on pulling on the pretty red shoes which Mrs. Heathdale had given her to wear when her father returned. Sally, with a delicacy which would have done honour to a more refined station, was trying to conceal them from Pleasance as she entered the room. The tears and sobbings, which re-echoed through

the small house, had confirmed Sally's suspicions that something fatal had happened, and the maid had listened with tears to the account of the death of her master and his friend.

"Give her the shoes, Sally, never mind;" and the poor young widow leaned her aching head against the child's fat shoulders and cried feebly.

She was too much exhausted to be as miserable as she would be after she slept.

On the following morning the chests were brought up on the shoulders of some stalwart seamen. Mrs. Heathdale paid them double what she would have given to porters, for they had known and served under Lieutenant Heathdale. It was breaking the last link with the profession of her husband and son, when, with raised hats from their curly heads, the men left the house. The heavy chests, which represented the homes of exiles on the broad sea, could not be carried up the small staircase. They were to be unpacked in the dining room, and Mrs. Heathdale advised Pleasance not to open hers for a few weeks,

when they would be more inured to sorrow. She dreaded the violent bursts of grief, which would be reawakened by the sight of all the small trifles which must bring the dead so vividly to the memory of the survivors.

CHAPTER II.

"An anodyne, but not a remedy."

NINETY pounds a year pension, as the widow of a lieutenant, and the house, were all that remained for the support of Mrs. Heathdale. Whilst her son lived he had contributed liberally to her comfort from his pay. Pleasance would possess the five hundred a year left to Edgar, and would be comparatively wealthy.

"I fear I must leave this house, and take a lodging," Mrs. Heathdale said.

"Oh!" cried Pleasance; "is not my money enough for us all three?" and she fetched little Margaret, and, placing her in the arms of her friend, said proudly, "There! I know you would never leave her. Let us always

live together. 'Where thou diest I will die, and there will I also be buried.' "

Mr. Syer craved permission to call and offer consolation to the sufferers. Mrs. Heathdale declined, for her own part and for Pleasance's, to see any one for the present. When she did receive Mr. Syer, she stipulated by a previous note that no reference should be made to any personal subjects.

The chests were opened after such a lapse of time as Mrs. Heathdale had considered prudent with regard to the health of Pleasance.

She, herself, knew the contents of her son's, of which she had so frequently superintended the packing. There were her letters, all dated and tied carefully, labelled "letters from my beloved mother," a few favourite books, his log book, that record of a daily life, so useful, and so abruptly closed.

Pleasance also found her letters carefully tied together ; Edgar had a long one addressed to her unfinished in his blotting-book with reference to them, speaking with the greatest admiration on the signs of mental culture they exhibited ; " much as I loved you, darling

Pleasance," he had written, "I had felt a little repugnance to introducing an uneducated girl to my father and sisters ; your humble birth was a matter of indifference to me—but the want of culture was, shall I confess it? a serious drawback to the thought of our meeting my family. But my Pleasance now is not only one of the most beautiful of her sex, but one of the best educated and intelligent.

"We owe this first to your love for me, which gave the impulse to study, and has continued to influence you for three years ; and next to the careful training of that dear and charming woman with whom you reside. May you ever continue to do so when I am compelled to be absent on duties connected with my profession. I can now look forward with much pleasure to my return to you ; will you forgive me, Pleasance, that I have never told them at home of my marriage? The subject was painful to me—I could hardly confide it to my father when my mother was scarcely laid in her grave, and the concealment, once entered upon, was difficult to break through ; but now I can take you by the hand and

say, 'Father, I sinned in that I married her without your knowledge, but you will find her worthy to be your daughter, and a far better wife than I deserve.' My thoughts are always homeward bound ; they rest on you and the small house overlooking the sea with longing so intense, that, as the time decreases when I may hope to meet you again, sad forebodings dim the prospect, and whisper that we are never again to be reunited in this world. If this be so, may you be protected in your lonely journey through life, you and that angel child whom I never, never saw ! I bless you, darling, for the photographs you have sent me of her and of yourself. Those of the child satisfy me most ; you come out too dark—your golden hair is not represented truly—yellow becomes black in a photograph it seems ; but the infant is charming from the first, taken at three months old—when she slept with the perfect little fingers relaxed in repose, painted as only the sun can paint—to the handsome clever-looking child of two years, standing sturdily on her feet and looking out of the picture as if she was scanning the world in which she

must take her part. Dear as she is to me, my Pleasance, she has not usurped the first place in my heart : you there reign without a rival ; may heaven bless you both and make her a comfort to your life if mine be not spared ! Do not stint yourself of anything you require for my sake. The only thing which I very much longed for was books, before poor Pyne's legacy made me really a wealthy man for a sailor, and those I have been able to afford myself. The ship is rolling so desperately that I can scarcely make my words distinct. I hear there is a ship in distress.

“ Farewell, my own darling.”

The last half page was left, the blotted words visible on the opposite sheet. They were the last of which that true heart had left its tracings on paper. The last circumstances of his life might plead with the recording angel for the obliteration of the single unfilial act which had blurred its brightness.

The eyes of the young widow were tear-stained and blood-shot for some days after reading this. She kept it for some time as

being too sacred to reveal to anyone ; but a generous desire to give her elder friend pleasure induced her to place it in her hands.

Mrs. Heathdale smiled sadly, patted her cheek, and gave back the letter,

“ Praise gave her no pleasure now—
The springs of happiness were dried up.”

Again it was morning at Birchland Rectory, but this time Mr. Petrel, the father of poor Edgar, was to learn from the public papers the bad news about his son. There was no mother whose heart would have thrilled with anxiety or subsided into hopeless grief—but at the table where sat Mr. Petrel and his daughter Mary, a step-mother presided ; she was grand in folds of massive grey silk, which gave dignity to her spare form, and crowned with feathery folds of delicate lace, which shadowed locks in which glistened, sparsely, grey hairs.

Mr. Petrel had married Miss Earl twelve months after poor Margaret's death. The lady was not so blunt-witted as not to require

a settlement of all her own property on herself and *her* children, if she should bear any to Mr. Petrel. She had instituted many reforms in the Rectory—only the eldest daughter was permitted to share the meals of her father and step-mother. The younger ones lived in the nursery with a governess, which, whilst it increased Mr. Petrel's expenses, increased also his daily comfort.

"Bless me!" cried the father, opening and turning the pages of the *Times*. "Here is an extract from the *Portsmouth Chronicle*—about someone of my name. It cannot be! Yes, the 'Isis.' Oh! Good Heaven! Poor Edgar."

"What about poor Edgar?" asked Mrs. Petrel, fretfully and mockingly.

The father did not hear. He was reading a paragraph which spoke of the gallantry and devotion, even unto death, of the youth and his lieutenant; and, touched by the reflected glory on himself, he covered his face with his handkerchief and left the table, taking refuge in the walled garden and a cigar.

Mary put forth her hand to reach the paper,

having dimly caught the truth that Edgar was mentioned in it.

Mrs. Petrel removed it quietly out of her reach, and placed her own elbow on it.

"No *well* brought up young woman ever reads the public papers, especially the *Times*, which is intended only for the perusal of men and matrons."

"Perhaps then, madam," replied the rebellious step-daughter, "you will be so good as to read aloud for my benefit the account which has reference to my brother."

Mrs. Petrel could scarcely refuse a request so reasonable—but she indemnified herself for the conception by lingering as long as she could first over a crusty piece of buttered toast. Then she finished her coffee and read, with as little feeling as an automaton, the account which had fired hundreds of sympathetic brains, and softened hundreds of devoted hearts, at breakfast-tables of the United Kingdom that morning—for,

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

And the pulses of stranger men and women beat quicker as they read of the helpless,

saved by the helpful, who were so soon to lack the aid they had given.

Mary wept, for all little jealousies of her brothers and sisters had vanished when that dreadful mother-in-law had been imported, and she thought only how her mother had loved the drowned youth, and that no one would now weep for him but herself, and, perhaps, her father.

Mr. Petrel was striding up and down the walled garden. He had succeeded in winning Miss Earl, and having adored her delicate mincing ways, and her refined toilette when she was Miss Earl, he hated her now that she was Mrs. Petrel. The marriage of convenience had turned out no better than the imprudent marriage of love.

"It is really extraordinary," Mr. Petrel had observed to himself, when the slow conviction of its failure stole over his mind ; "it is most incomprehensible how those women could neither of them make me happy, nor themselves, such a good-tempered fellow as I am ! never interfering in the comfort of others, only asking leave to enjoy the sunshine of my own placid temper !"

Margaret was poor and pinched; Jane is rich and pinching. Jane Earl chose to have her own coachman and horses and footman, in attendance on herself. These belongings were considered next to herself in importance in the family, and if by any mismanagement the sugar ran short, Mrs. Petrel's attendants, *i.e.*, the ladysmaid, coachman and footman, took what quantity there was, and the nursery went without.

Mr. Petrel vainly tried to re-establish his authority over his better half by taking the high ground of a minister of the gospel on whom in a great degree depended

"Her certain title to the joys above."

But familiarity had produced contempt, and she gave her husband to understand that she had discovered to her cost that he possessed not that divining rod which could guide to the living waters—the true high priest was yet to seek.

Mr. Petrel did not insist. It was a *rôle* too artificial to Jasper Petrel to simulate for any lengthened period. So long as Mrs. Petrel

possessed any latent hope of maternity, her temper was kept within bounds ; but as the hope of progeny grew less and less, the desire of possessing it grew stronger and stronger, and her irritability became almost pitiable, even to the victims of it. Mr. Petrel had to pay his household expenses, now increased by three persons, if he balanced the cost of one wife by that of another, and he became more and more pinched for ready-money, whilst his wife, with her large balance at her bankers, might have rendered him wealthy, but declined to help to bear his load even by the touch of her little finger.

Now "the father" was stirred to a spasmodic life in the depths of that selfish heart. "Poor young fellow ! poor Edgar ! how well he was spoken of ! Any one might be proud of having possessed such a son !" Then he lighted a fresh cigar to continue his mental discourse on the new phase of circumstances. "I wonder if the young fellow had saved money. He sent me two hundred the first year that he took his legacy. I should not have minded if he had continued that subscription to the family expenses." Suddenly

he stopped. A bright thought struck him. "Sailors are the most reckless creatures that live. He is sure not to have made a will. That five hundred a year must be mine."

He flung away the remainder of his cigar, and went in to his bureau to write a letter to his lawyer. When the letter was written and posted, he returned to his family with a charming air of resignation on his countenance, which might almost have been mistaken for one of subdued hilarity.

"Your brother could not have perished more nobly," he said with seeming tenderness to his red-eyed daughter. "Let that tend to console you, my child, as it has already served to diminish my paternal suffering."

Mrs. Petrel listened in silence.

"I dare say he was just as intolerable as are all the rest of that woman's children: but he is dead, and there is an end of the matter," was Mrs. Petrel's epitaph on poor Edgar.

"To the Rev. Jasper Petrel, Birchland Rectory, Mudshire.

"REV. SIR,

"In answer to your inquiries as to

whether your son, my lamented officer, died intestate, I regret I can give you no information. All his property on board the 'Isis,' contained in his sea-chest, was delivered by my sailors to his wife, residing at Plymouth, to whom I had the heartrending task of conveying the news of his decease."

"Good heavens and earth, the sea, and all that in them is!" exclaimed the Rev. Jasper Petrel. "What a miserable affair, what an unlooked-for disappointment! What a good-for-nothing boy to marry without my consent."

He had to conceal his chagrin as he best could, lest it might provoke the sneers and cruel smiles of his wife. How he hated her cold grey eyes and thin compressed lips. She was sufficiently shrewd to suspect that some disappointed hope existed. Mary, that is, the eldest daughter, was a shield with which the father could cover his head in the day of battle, *i.e.*, of keen encounter of wits between Mrs. Petrel and himself.

Mrs. Petrel had "a lean and hungry look," and required but little sleep. How her hus-

band dreaded the glisten of her grey eye, when he had nodded over his newspaper, till he started up, having become chilly down the back, by outsitting the fire. She knew as well as possible that if she moved hand or foot, or disturbed an inch of bed-clothes, Mr. Petrel would be on his guard, and rebuild the fire, and take the *Saturday Review* or the *Spectator*, and leave her waiting in ambush till the small hours ; when, however, the clothes were turned down, and the marital knee gingerly inserted beneath them,

“ Lest his too lawful bedfellow should wake,”

and his eyes fixed anxiously on the partner of his days and nights, she would open one glistening grey orb, and observe him in silence.

She was swathed in a cobweb of laces, of which the centre seemed a solid white bag, such as are to be observed in the corners of neglected rooms, where Betsy, the maid, cannot reach them, and has no male friend out of doors to attach the brush to the convenient branch of a tree.

On the night in question she had received

during the day a letter from her sister—the wife of the magistrate who had committed poor Pleasance to prison—and was burning with the malicious desire to inflict the contents on her husband. She could hardly do so with due regard to propriety in the presence of so young a girl as Mary.

Mr. Petrel suppressed a groan at the glance of that terrible eye, and turned his back on the partner of his bed.

“Mr. Petrel,” she began, with cat-like softness.

“What is it?” cried Jasper, with less than his usual patience.

“We have so little opportunity of speaking in private, Mr. Petrel, having your daughter always in our company, that I am obliged to break my own rest and yours if I want to speak on any subject unfitted for her ear.”

“Speak away,” cried Mr. Petrel, crossly, with his face turned to the distant wall.

“Oh, I shall not interfere with your dreams. long, sir, only you know your eldest son is dead, and you have expressed no wishes about mourning. It is almost a week since you read the account in the *Times*, and I thought

possibly that it might have slipped your memory."

Now Mr. Petrel had intended to place his children in handsome mourning if he had found that Edgar had made him his heir ; but a saying impressed on his mind in childhood by his nurse made him hesitate. "For my part," said the crone, "I never cry for them as don't leave me enough to buy a pocket-handkerchief to wipe my eyes."

Had he succeeded to his son's poor five-hundred a year, all the children should have mourned with due decorum ; but if there was a wife there was probably a child, and if a child, certainly a will, or such a legal distribution of property as would make his share not worth inquiring about.

"I really wish, Jane, you would let a poor fellow sleep. I cannot talk on subjects so painful at night."

"You are always so drowsy in the morning, Mr. Petrel. You know I altered the breakfast hour to ten o'clock to suit you, and yet you are never ready."

"Well, speak away, Mrs. Petrel, and have done with it."

"Do you wish the mourning to be ordered or not? If you do, you had better write the letter yourself. I do not feel disposed to provide my step-children with mourning for a wild young fellow I never saw."

"I never heard that Edgar was a wild young fellow, madam. He died most nobly, according to all accounts."

Mrs. Petrel sighed.

"I feel more reconciled daily to my childless state, when I see the marvellous blindness of parents with regard to their offspring. The pious head-master of Dulchester college once said in my presence that parents were utterly ignorant as to the characters of their sons. The masters of the schools where they were placed only had the means of judging. Naturally; they live with them nine months in the year, and with their parents but three months."

"Very likely," said Jasper; "and consequently, when a youth lives three years in a comparatively small space under the eye of a captain, that man can best speak as to his officer's daily conduct and moral worth."

"Ahem!" said Mrs. Petrel; and nothing more.

"For heaven's sake," cried Jasper, turning his head impatiently, "speak out without any more hems and ha's!"

"I can only suppose, Mr. Petrel, that if your son Edgar was as moral as you declare him to have been, that the poor youth must have been of weak intellect, or he would not have married in the way he did."

Jasper was not aware that his wife knew of this fact, and he was consequently a little taken aback at first; but answered gently, in half a second, that he really felt inclined to think that any man who married was of weak intellect; especially he was a confounded ass to do so a second time.

"Once is indeed bad enough," replied the lady, with as much assumed sweetness as her husband. "However, your son seems to have had degraded tastes, notwithstanding his high character and pure life; for I understand he married a girl off a Cornish mine—one of the most degraded class of women, who work openly with all kinds of men; and this particular woman had just been the cast-off mis-

tress of a coarse fellow whom she robbed—and—and—but I cannot tell the rest ; no modest woman could, even to her husband."

The Rev. Jasper Petrel suppressed an oath, and rolled himself round so impetuously in the upper bedclothes, that he looked like the silk-worm moth, with its head just penetrated through the top of its cocoon. The consequence was, naturally, that the lady, being left without her proper quantity of warmth, began to shiver and reproach her liege lord with misappropriation of their joint property. In truth, the smothered wrongs of two years leaped into light in the space of the next five minutes.

"Mr. Petrel, had I had any idea of your intense selfishness, I never, never would have married you. I have watched you carefully, and I must say I never saw your equal in selecting with the utmost swiftness, nicety and precision the under part of the buttered roll, the fins of a turbot, the liver of a cod, the thin part of a piece of salmon, the tenderest slice and the best fat of a haunch of venison, the trail of the woodcock, with the most tempting portion of the under toast where it was fattest——"

“There, that will do,” interrupted Jasper. “There, madam, take the bedclothes; in future I shall not trouble you for any portion of them.” And he sprung out of bed; and flinging his dressing-gown over his arm, he sought the small adjoining room, which he might call his own, and, making up the fire, prepared to pass the night there as best he might. As he sunk into slumber he said—

“I think if Mary has mourning it will be as much as decency can require. The young children will not need any.”

CHAPTER III.

“To aid thy mind’s development, to watch
Thy dawn of little joys, to sit and see
Almost thy very growth, to see thee catch
Knowledge of objects—wonders yet to thee.”

IN the small house by the sea, the two widows passed their lives in sad tranquillity. They had one occupation—the education of the child; one outlet for their affections—little Margaret. Margaret loved both ladies. Mrs. Heathdale taught the child to call her grandmamma. There had been in that lady’s mind a little latent reluctance to call Pleasance “my dear child;” Mrs. Heathdale felt that it would have been utterly impossible for any daughter of hers to have acted as Pleasance had done. Her love of race, rather than her reason or her heart, refused to acknowledge Pleasance as her child, ; but when

the sinless infant was born, and the elder lady watched the growth of the child's beauty and intelligence, all the devotion of a grandmother was lavished on the new comer, her godchild.

Little Margaret did not resemble her mother in the least degree. She had not the softness of Pleasance, nor the timid, mournful look in her mother's eyes. She promised to be taller, and on a larger scale. Her face sparkled with beauty and intelligence, her step was firm and assured. Both her godmother and Pleasance united in carrying out plans of strict economy in her early years, that the money might be expended in Margaret's education as she grew older and required masters. The daily paper was given up—what cared they now for shipping intelligence? Both women agreed that it would be utterly impossible to send her to school. What! deprive themselves of the presence of that angel child for nine months out of twelve! Such a sacrifice could not be thought of. So Mr. Grand, the organist and music-master, was engaged to come twice a week to teach Margaret the piano, as soon as

her small fingers could stretch eight notes ; and the dancing-mistress, to teach her the positions and the graces of that forgotten dance, the minuet ; whilst French, German, Italian, and drawing-masters, filled up the vacant hours.

As Margaret grew and learnt, and seemed to enjoy her learning, the love of Pleasance mingled with awe and self-abasement. Poor Pleasance's domestic accomplishments of writing, ciphering, speaking correctly, both in grammar and intonation, seemed dwarfed into nothing by the side of a girl who did all these as if by nature, and superadded the partial knowledge of foreign languages, and of music and painting.

"She is the image of her dear father," Pleasance used to say to her companion ; and the girl did resemble the idolized remembrance of Edgar Petrel enshrined in his widow's breast.

Who has not felt how the memory of an absent form and face becomes idealized to the thinker in absence ? It is as if a purified spirit lived in our remembrance, and not the creature in flesh and blood, and with the defects

to which flesh and blood are heir. Frequently the sight of the real person dispels the illusion for a time, but absence generally restores it in its pristine beauty.

It was a vision of this kind with which Pleasance compared the blooming girl on whom her eye rested from dawn to dark. She was her father's own child, both in person and mind, but with more than her father's scorn of ill-doing; for the older we grow the less we expect perfection in this world.

"To have a right judgment in all things," etc., had been Mrs. Heathdale's great effort to train this beautiful and intelligent girl. This wise lady foresaw that from her violent passions and quick sensibility she would need all the restraint of morality and religion to make her path through life a pleasant and a safe one. It was well that she had an instructress so faithful and so fearless. .

Poor Pleasance's lips faltered when she spoke of the beauty of honesty, for she remembered the transgression of her youth. There were times when she shrank beneath the eagle glances of her daughter, and quivered when her eloquent lips spoke with

scorn and loathing of some fallen creature, whose failings in the path of rectitude had come within her observation. In Margaret's code there was a right and wrong, divided by a broad demarcation. She could make no excuse to her own mind for any footslip which transgressed over the boundary.

Mrs. Heathdale sighed at the thought of the future, foreseeing "breakers ahead," as her son Edward would have expressed himself.

Time went on smoothly till Margaret attained her fifteenth year. Few changes had taken place in the small house overlooking the sea. In the interval, and about two years after the death of the two young sailors, Mr. Syer, who had felt attracted towards Pleasance when he first saw her, and had been proportionately disappointed to find her a matron instead of a maiden, made her an offer of marriage. It had to be made in writing, for the two ladies were inseparable. One sat at the right hand, and one at the left of the work table in the small drawing room. It had been the wish of Pleasance never to lay aside her widow's cap, but she had felt compelled to do so by motives of economy.

The headdress, so pure-looking and compact when the muslin is new and stiff, becomes irregular when it has been subjected to the clear starcher, and is both troublesome and expensive. Pleasance therefore gathered her golden curls into a knot at the back of her head, and brushed them as smooth as the ripple of their natural wave permitted. She wore black of some glossless material, with muslin collar and cuffs. These renewed each morning gave her an air of cleanness and neatness, which, with the delicate whiteness of her skin, the soft bloom of her cheeks, and the beautiful colour of her waving hair, made an exquisite picture of womanhood—

“And on that cheek, and o’er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,”

said Mr. Syer to himself, quoting the lines. There were material advantages in the step he desired to take. Mrs. Petrel was said to possess five hundred pounds yearly, besides her charms, personal and moral. So he wrote his proposal, and was declined by Pleasance in a couple of the most succinct sentences.

When a woman does not love a man, she feels intensely disgusted with a proposal of marriage from him, however respectfully couched may be the language in which it is expressed.

The rejection was most carefully written, in sentences expressed by the most beautiful of Italian hands. She flung the proposal and its answer to her friend, with some amount of irritability.

Mrs. Heathdale remarked that she had seen the coming event.

"You do not like him?" she asked, interrogatively.

"I did not care either to like or dislike him before," said Pleasance; "but now the thought of him is loathsome to me."

"You are quite sure of that, dear Pleasance? Remember that I cannot live for ever, and that Margaret will grow up and marry. You may be left in solitude when solitude means desolation, because it comes in the winter of our lives, when our senses are dull to pleasure."

"You forget," said Pleasance, with some bitterness, "that there was but one man in the world who could marry me, for he knew *all*—

I am his widow. In heaven, I trust, our spirits may be re-united. On earth I have no more to do with marrying, in my own person. I trust I may not survive you, madam, the truest, wisest friend a poor uninformed girl ever possessed. I hope I may die before Margaret learns from the past to despise her mother."

"I trust she may never learn anything which may give you pain," said the elder lady. "With the most strict of our sex, your early youth at the time, and your faultless life since, might plead for a merciful judgment. But why rake up the past at all? I grant that you could not marry a gentleman who was unaware of your antecedents, but as you have no wish to contract a second alliance, the subject need never again rise to the surface."

CHAPTER IV.

"The animation of youth overflows spontaneously in harmonious movements." J

MARGARET grew up, educated sedulously, and learning as only those children learn who are separated from companions of their own age. She was tall, graceful, and womanly in her person at fifteen, and possessed of a brilliant beauty. She had learnt dancing, as well as she could be taught in the small drawing-room at home. The tables and chairs used to be shunted into the small bedroom at the back, which was luckily unoccupied, that Margaret might go through the succession of poses required by the minuets, which Mrs. Heathdale had insisted on having her taught.

Her mother and nominal grandmother wedged into a corner to make themselves as

small as possible, to watch Margaret and the little withered graceful woman who represented the beau of the olden time, as they stood side by side retiring in a sidelong manner from each other, till, at a proper distance, came the important curtsy and bow. The curtsy, during the sinking and rising, occasioning heartshakings from the two ladies, lest the slightest unsteadiness should mar the graceful reverence. Then, when the young lady had regained her proper equilibrium, came one of the most picturesque positions of the dance, when the left toe was pointed in one direction, the fair head turned over the left shoulder to look at her partner, and the rich draperies held up in the hands, which depended from the well rounded elbows, making a pose which for tranquil grace was unapproachable. When the dancer was a well-grown girl of fifteen, with a finely shaped head, supported by the pillar of a rounded throat; when the face was brilliantly set in dark tresses, with a clear skin, bright colour, and rosy lips, partly unclosed from a slight breathless nervousness—the sight might have entranced a stranger with admiration, whilst

the mother and godmother nearly worshipped the dancer.

It was when Margaret had one day finished a very successful performance that Mrs. Heathdale begged Madame Thierry to sit down and drink a glass of wine after her exertions.

Margaret had retired to change her silk hose and shoes for some of commoner texture.

Mrs. Heathdale, who was always the speaker, congratulated the French lady on the success of her instructions to Miss Petrel.

“ Ah ! yaas, she dance vel, but vat is dat in thees leetle salon ? You, madame, and you, you see haire nobody else. She dance bad, all ve same for me ; no credit. You comb to my academy with meese ; she learn de valse, de quadrille, de Lancers ; now she not able to dance in company with other young ladies—not learn figures.”

Here was a blow ! it had not struck either lady. Of course, the idea could not have entered the head of Pleasance, who had never been inside a ball-room in her life ; but

Mrs. Heathdale felt she ought to have considered the subject, and seen the difficulty before.

Pleasance looked at Mrs. Heathdale to decide, as she did on all occasions which appertained to the customs of society.

"We ought to have thought of this sooner, Pleasance. What Madame Thierry says is perfectly just. Margaret's proficiency is useless to her, because she knows nothing of the commoner usages of dancing, and we are unjust to this lady in depriving her of the credit she deserves in having rendered our child so accomplished in her most graceful art. I think we should one or the other accompany Margaret by turns to the dancing academy."

"Certainly," said Pleasance, who felt determined, with all the might of her small will, that her turn should never come. She grew more painfully shy day by day. Madame was gratified by the concession.

"You shall comb next Wednesday to my academie, Meese Margareete, to do your dancing there with the rest of *mes jeunes demoiselles*."

Margaret's eyes sparkled at the prospect. She looked for confirmation to Mrs. Heathdale, and read it in her smiles. She longed to make acquaintance with some creatures of her own age.

Sally—who had, alas! become old Sally—recognized the longing for human fellowship in Margaret's grave and pensive eyes.

“Lawk! my dear! you'll grow wholly melancholy with them two ladies upstairs, your ma and your grandma. They will do anything in the world for you that they can, but all the love in the world can't bring them back to sixteen again! I wonder, my dear, that with all that studying your poor head don't go off its balance. Where's the use of it all, the French and the German and the Italian, when you don't see a soul to speak the languages to?”

And thus worked on, the young beauty of fifteen began to think that possibly she was not sufficiently provided with society.

The day arrived when the young lady was to make her first appearance at the academy. Madame's charges were to be reduced, as her private attendance terminated, and this was

fortunate, as a fly was necessary to convey the wearer of the satin shoes and silk hose, unless she could change her dress when she reached the dancing-room, of which she could not be certain.

CHAPTER V.

“Dress has a moral effect upon the conduct of mankind.”

MRS. HEATHDALE knew the importance of being well dressed herself, and put on a rich black poplin, which had been presented to her by Pleasance. It was seldom allowed to be seen, lest its rich gloss should suffer any diminution from dust or other injury.

When Mrs. Heathdale arrived, she, being early, selected her seat near the fire, in a position which commanded the best view, and was most sheltered from draughts. Then she deliberately stood up and shook out the folds of the rich poplin, and allowed them to occupy a chair on each side of her, besides the one which she had chosen for her support.

“Now, Margaret, observe. The position one claims in society is generally accorded

one if the claim is made with sufficient decision and distinctness. I do not know any of the women we shall meet here to-day, but I mean them to realize that I am to be treated with respect ; so I have dressed handsomely, which women hate and respect at the same moment, and I have taken the best place, though I should have liked another equally well, because I do not mean that either you or I shall be 'sat upon.' Come and place yourself on the chair next but one to me. This will mark your respect for your companion, in that you do not desire to press too importunately on her."

Margaret obeyed. Her hair was divided over the brow, and carried back over the ears, where it was fastened to the rich clustering braids of dark tresses in a Grecian knot at the back of the head.

Madame Thierry did not permit her pupils to wear long flowing hair, because she said she could not judge properly whether the movement of the neck was graceful when it was so concealed.

The ladies and governesses who attended the academy were quite a distinct set from

those who formed the Dorcas society, no better and no worse, for human nature is much alike, whether in the guise of charity or in the wake of fashion.

Mrs. Denny sailed up the room with two daughters, and was arrested in her progress to her accustomed seat by finding it occupied ; not only the chair itself, but two of its neighbours, seemed insufficient to support the weight of a black poplin of the richest of textures, worn by the ox-eyed matron, who sat like a Juno unmoved amidst the trampling of coming footsteps, the staring of hostile eyes, and, worst of all, the squealing of Mr. Dapert's Kit.

Mrs. Denny was the *lady*—she would have blushed to have been called wife—of the chief surgeon of the dockyard. She lived in a row of charming houses, surrounded by a garden, from which they were raised by a flight of steps.

The houses, in reality, resembled each other exactly in size and structure ; but Mrs. Denny declared so decidedly that hers was the best, and had been selected for the doctor specially as a tribute to his superior skill, that, after a

slight struggle, her neighbours all agreed that she must know, and gave in to her opinion.

She looked at the possessor of her accustomed seat: with one glance she took in the gorgeous fabric of the dress, the imperturbable majesty of the wearer, the light elegance of figure and apparel in the young girl, who was evidently a new pupil, and decided that "those people were somebodies." Her own daughters were good-natured, rather blowzy, common-looking girls of sixteen and eighteen.

Madame Thierry called some of the young people to perform their positions and steps, whilst the mothers and governesses looked on, thinking that the new pupil was too ignorant to join in the lesson, though it comprised but the rudiments of the art of dancing. Then madame desired eight young ladies to stand up for the quadrille.

"You will observe, Meese Petrel; you will walk the figure." When the first figure of "*Le Pantalon*" has been performed in walking, the mistress said, "Now you will dance it à droit, à gauche, chaine des dames. Now you, monsieur, you turn, and she, monsieur, she you turn."

Margaret understood more by having walked the figure than by the directions; especially as she saw no monsieur by whom she was to be turned, but was set to Miss Denny, who had taken the part of a gentleman by madame's orders.

"Your partner—that young lady—is quite a tyro, if I may say so," said Mrs. Denny, when her daughter came back to her seat.

"A vaat?" asked Madame, in a cutting voice.

"A beginner—a fresh pupil—a—well—a girl who does not know her work," cried Mrs. Denny in despair, thinking of her last housemaid.

"She! not know! Meese Petrel! not know? She dance well—next to myself. She's a nymph—a sylph—a very goddess of de dance. What you call Terpsichore. When I have her taught years five every week, twice times, and you ladies give your children twelve lessons, and you think they can dance. Pupils of Madame Thierry—you say—no, no—she is only a pupil who learns for years. Meese Petrel!" she cried in a fury, her anger falling on Margaret's innocent head, "you stand up this minute, with Mr. Dappert

for your partner ; and I will play on the piano the minuet de la cour. You show these ladies that you are not a beginner—a tyro, indeed !”

Mr. Dappert, a little old Frenchman, was delighted at the idea of showing off his own dancing with such a graceful partner. He hastened to his hat to obtain his gloves, and returned immediately with a piteous face, addressing himself in a low voice to the mistress.

“Ah ! madame ; how is it possible without a chapeau bras ?”

Madame Thierry felt like poor Lord Raglan, who objected to officers who made difficulties. The general commanding directs that the troops do hut themselves ; the troops regret that it is impossible, only half of each hut having arrived, and that they have no spades or picks to erect even those halves. But, happier than that much badgered hero, Mrs. Thierry, whilst she glared at her vassal angrily, thought with relief of the theatrical wardrobe used by her young ladies at the end of the vacation in their scenic representations ; and going to the attic, she reappeared with

a chapeau bras, which Monsieur Dappert received with a bow worthy the age of the Grand Monarch himself.

Then madame seated herself at the piano, and the old gentleman went up to the place occupied by Margaret, and requested the honour of leading her to the dance. The rest of the mothers and pupils drew together, huddled in a corner out of the way of their irate dancing-mistress.

Madame longed to make her observation and give her directions to Miss Petrel; but she was compelled to keep them all within her own bosom, for her object was to impress the ladies with the advantages to be gained by having their daughters taught from early childhood. So the various instructions died,

“Like a voiceless nightingale’s
Heart stifled in its cells.”

She longed to say: head more over left shoulder—toe pointed—curtsy low, to show your reverence to the company—lower, lower—steady. Hah! (a long breath of relief was here drawn as Margaret regained her equilibrium) now opposite your partner—curtsy to

him, but more slightly—he bows. This was succeeded by each party stalking on opposite sides of the room, the gentlemen seemingly intent on pursuing the lady; but at a distance so respectful that no eagerness seemed to hurry his well measured and toe-pointed footsteps. At length he flung his chapeau bras on his head defiantly, not to say fiercely, and pressed it down with a well directed tap on its curved height. This seemed to express determination to do or die, for he shortly after took possession of the lady, and leading her back to the place whence they started, the parting reverence was made to the audience, and that period of the exhibition concluded; silence followed.

“Ah, madame!” exclaimed the old man, “veel you not play also the gavotte so prettie?”

“Certainly, if you are capable of dancing it, monsieur. I was not aware.”

She meant—I knew not that you could be so agile.

“Try!” said monsieur, emphatically; so madame struck the first three bangs of the notes, and away monsieur frisked, scarcely touching the floor with the points of his toes;

his partner on the other side just as lively and coquettish as himself.

When the dance was concluded he conducted Margaret with great politeness to her seat, with a stately compliment.

"Madame," he said, "you surpass the magic of Medea. She cut an old man to pieces to restore his youth, with intentional cruelty, and failed. You have given him back his youth successfully, for a short time it is true, with intentional kindness, by the most charming process in the world—that of dancing with him."

Margaret smiled graciously, and showed by an intelligent look that she understood the erudite compliment; replying that monsieur was so delightful a partner that she should be glad to repeat the charm when he would condescend to accept her as a partner.

Madame looked on half pleased, half affronted, as Queen Elizabeth might have done had she seen one of her nobles doing homage to some foreign potentate and wearing his decorations.

Mr. Dappert belonged to *her*. What business had he to be paying compliments to that child? An old fool that he was!

Her little plan of mortifying her pupils and their mothers and guardians had fallen on her own head, and all because monsieur was charmed by the dancing of a beautiful young "meese."

Dancing was dancing, and he ought to know that fact, and to remember the truth, of which he must be well aware, that she, Madame Thierry, was the only good performer of that exquisite art in England.

M. Dappert was engaged to sup with his fair tyrant that evening, and she so flouted him, and uttered such sarcastic references to January and May, that he could find no flavour in the scalloped oysters ; and adding a little cayenne pepper, in a fit of distraction, swallowed too much, which produced a spasm of choking, during the continuance of which madame became so alarmed that, what with patting on the back and glasses of water, and coaxing and petting, the offence was forgotten, and the reconciliation completed.

CHAPTER VI.

"At short distances the senses are despotic."—EMERSON.

"THOSE two," cried Mrs. Denny, "must be somebodies!" as she walked home to the Dock-yard with her daughters, a truism to which the young ladies safely assented. "You see," she continued, "madame says the young lady has had lessons since her earliest years. A fine sum that must have cost! Private lessons too! Did you catch the name, Eliza?"

"Miss Petal, was it?"

"No. Miss Peril, or some name like that," said the younger sister.

"So stupid of you girls not to catch it! Where is the use of daughters if they do not hear quicker than their mothers? I did not hear the name of the lady at all. I suppose

that was Peril too. Madame was in such a temper that I dared not ask her. I would never go to the academy again, but that there is no one to equal her as an instructress. And, mercy on me! to see that girl dance was a treat indeed. Can it be possible that you girls will ever do like that? I wonder where she has her shoes made—they set off the instep so well. I am sure you might get acquainted with Miss Peril if you chose to be agreeable to her.”

“I am sure I do not know how,” cried Eliza, half crying. “How can one be agreeable to a girl who does not see one?”

Mrs. Denny was rather conscience-stricken at this observation. It was just what the elder lady had done with regard to herself—she was neither civil nor uncivil. She simply did not see any one in the room but her own girl and the dancing mistress. That, no doubt, was a proof of her high breeding.

When Mrs. Heathdale returned home with Margaret, who went to her room to take off her dancing shoes, she said to Pleasance—

“I am sorry you were not there, my dear! I never saw anything so beautiful as Margaret’s

dancing the minuet and gavotte with the dancing master."

"You did much better than I could have done, I am certain," replied poor Pleasance ; and Mrs. Heathdale did not deny it.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Education is a companion which no fortune can depress—no clime destroy—no enemy alienate—no despot enslave—at home a friend—abroad an introduction—in solitude a solace—in society an ornament—it chastens vice—it guides virtue—it gives at once a grace and a government to genius.”
—PHILLIPS.

THE progress of the schoolmaster at home and abroad has driven girls much in advance of their relatives. Margaret loved both her mother and Mrs. Heathdale, sincerely ; but when, with sparkling eyes, she wished for sympathy in her appreciation of the beauties of some foreign author, she was met, necessarily, by a dead wall on the part of the ladies.

Mrs. Heathdale knew enough of French to be able to read it fluently, and to speak it moderately, but nothing of Italian and German.

One day Margaret was reading "Faust," and turned to her mother, full of admiration of the skill and pathos of the writer.

"Tell me the story," said Pleasance, anxious to please her girl by showing interest in her occupations.

So Margaret began, and Pleasance listened to the introduction with wonder not unmixed with awe.

"My dear!" she said, "that is the book of Job over again, only more spun out."

"Oh, mamma! I will skip all that, and come to the tragedy itself," replied the girl, disconcerted.

She "read short" in the scene of the meditation of "Faust," till she came to the incantation which results in the bursting out of the red flame in which a luminous spirit becomes visible, when Pleasance visibly shuddered. The superstition learned in childhood still influenced her susceptible nature. From fifteen to thirty-two Pleasance had been living with a well-educated and lady-like woman, but let parents lay it to heart, nothing can recall the years from ten to fifteen; no after training, however carefully conducted, can efface the

first impressions made on the empty mind. My own convictions are, that a clever child is never so well brought up as by being subjected to regular hours of tuition twice during the day, and to the unconsciously received impressions she derives from association with well-educated persons, such as parents or governesses—instructresses, as it is the fashion to call them—in the intervals of tuition. Pleasance—silent, secluded, and contemplative—felt the influences of supernatural essences encircling her. She fancied she heard the spirit of Edgar wailing his last farewell to her from the distant ocean, when the blast swept northerly from the Bay of Biscay, and brought to her mind the images of that seething sea troubled by tempests. She fancied that he hovered near her in the beams of the bright sunshine when she bent her meek head in the glory of his first rising. She listened to Margaret's story with breathless interest. It seemed to her that it must have been all true. The situations were reversed between the two. The child was imparting amusement and instruction to the mother.

Margaret felt intuitively that her mother

would not care for the long conversation between Wagner and his master, nor his desire to purchase increased knowledge at the expense of his eternal life, but the face of Pleasance brightened with a smile of celestial triumph, when on the dark, brooding monologue of the sage burst the triumph of the Easter Hymn, "Christ is risen."

"Ah, my dear, that is beautiful!" said the mother; "'Christ is risen from the bosom of the grave,' and he will restore to us in future those who have been taken from us by death. Then my Margaret will be known to him, not, as I had hoped, as a beautiful child, but, far better, as an intelligent spirit."

The thoughts of Pleasance were always on the past. She forgot that she had lived her life, and had loved, and been loved in return, and that the well compacted mixture of corporeal life and mental strength which stood by her side would also require to run the same career; let us hope, under happier auspices.

The reading was finished for the day, and Pleasance tried to be content till the same

hour on the morrow ; but she could not lay the book aside, so irritated was her interest by the contemplation of the exquisite outlines by Retsch which were bound up with the German type from which Margaret translated the poem as she read.

On the following day Margaret read to her mother the description of spring on that Easter sabbath morning given by Faust as he stands on the height and looks back towards the town. "Hark ! from the dark hollow gate," cries the sage, "a murmuring noise issues ; they come out to look on the newly-risen sun. The population pour out in their gay dresses ; they celebrate the resurrection of their Lord, and they themselves have risen from the damp rooms of narrow dwelling-houses, from the toils of labour and of trade, from the oppressive air of pinnacles and roofs, from the crashing narrowness of streets ; from the miserable glooms of the cathedral they have emerged into light ; how the river, in its full extent, wafts along the joyous boats. Look at that last skiff laden almost to sinking, as it floats away from us. Even the distant mountain paths are replete

with moving creatures in brave clothes. Great and lowly exult together."

Pleasance thought this description so vivid and heart-stirring that she made Margaret repeat it. She had formed one of such a moving crowd in her old life, and she sympathized with the commonalty in their rejoicing.

It is stated that Mozart, when asked what audience he should prefer as a listener to his compositions, replied, "An intelligent and feeling woman of twenty-five years, because no woman before that time has become familiar with all the different phases of passion and sentiment."

Could Goëthe have witnessed the profound feeling of poor Pleasance for his poem, he might have been gratified at the result, few women having had her experience of the depths of ignorance and unconscious sin had also been trained to purer morals, and been guided to a higher ground on the social platform. That depth she had never forgotten. It loomed in her memory like a fearful dream. Had Edgar returned she might have forgotten her disgrace in the happiness of possessing

such a friend and protector; with his arm encircling her she might have dared the censure of the world; but with her daughter growing up before her, with the thought of the future, her sensitive heart closed itself like a wounded animal which seeks a close covert to escape further injury.

When the reading was continued, the interest of Pleasance became painful. Mephistopheles was not to her an embodiment of evil; he was the real devil—the spirit whom she had shrunk from in loneliness, always seeking whom he might devour; the malign image represented by Retsch haunted her even in sleep. He was mixed up with memories of her former persecutor, Mr. Pike. Her whole soul sympathized with Margaret's entreaties that Faust would avoid that fearful man, whose smile was so grim.

When the passion of Faust is abating, the description given by the fiend of the melancholy of Margaret in her desertion made Pleasance lean her head on the back of her chair and weep bitterly.

The thought how she had felt when simi-

larly left in loneliness, made her love more intense for him whose absence was involuntary.

“This love sits at home, and all grows narrow and confined to her. Her imagination never wanders an instant from thee, whom she loves with all the passion of which a young heart is capable. The time is piteously long to her ; she stands at the window, gazing at the clouds gathering over the town walls. ‘Would I were a bird’—so runs her song all through the day and half the night long. Now she is all joy, expecting thee ; now all sorrow, for thou dost not come ; now in tears, now seeming tranquil—but always passionately in love.”

The opiate given by the unconscious Margaret to her mother, to procure her unconsciousness of Margaret’s meetings with her beloved, filled Pleasance with dread. Her conscience could not reproach her, however, with any similar crime towards her relative. When Margaret murders her infant, Pleasance started up.

“You shall read no more of that dreadful book, child,” she said. “It is not possible.

Murder ! murder her own little infant ! Oh !
I *could* not have done that !”

“You see, mamma, she was mad—driven mad by that vile spirit of evil.”

Pleasance had become very pale.

“Margaret, had I known the book, you should never have read it. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil may be too dearly purchased.”

“I do not think any one who read ‘Faust’ would be rendered vicious by it,” said Margaret ; “the consequences of sin are described to be so frightful.”

Pleasance carried her complaint to her friend. “The German governess had no business to permit Margaret to read such a book,” she said.

“Do not disturb yourself, my dear Pleasance,” was the reply. “Ignorance is not innocence. It is well that girls should know that vice exists, and that its consequences are fearful and disastrous in this world as in the next. I do not think our girl is the worse for having read ‘Faust’ in the original.”

Margaret forgot all about her mother’s sympathy with the German maiden, for all

three women were filled with the anticipation of her first ball. It was but a private ball, after all; but still it was the first. What girl's heart has not leapt at the thought of such an occurrence?

Madame Thierry always gave a ball at the end of every half-year's tuition, and that lady looked forward to Margaret's appearance as a most powerful advertisement of her own successful tuition.

Pleasance and her friend had no society to which they could introduce their child; and this single ball, to which the families of the pupils were invited, could alone sum up what they could procure for her in the way of gaiety.

Margaret's dress was the subject of the gravest deliberation. No expense was to be spared, Pleasance thought. Mrs. Heathdale laughed.

"It really will not matter in the least. Do you remember, La Bruyère says, speaking of a girl who contracted her petticoats as much as possible, to resemble a statue. 'Take no trouble, Juliette: in no dress or undress will you ever resemble the

Venus de Medici.' On the converse, I say that, whatever may be Margaret's costume, she is certain to be the most beautiful girl in the room ; and, both from her height and the contrast offered in the tints of her skin and the colour of her hair, the most striking beauty there."

CHAPTER VIII.

"No man e'er found a happy life by chance,
Or yearned it into being with a wish."

YOUNG.

THE desire of happiness is as much a source of craving to the human mind as the desire of food is to the human body. The ass picks up the thistle and drops it, and returns to it again and again, till some satisfactory flavour is extracted from its juicy stem. The friendless child makes a plaything of a broken scrubbing-brush or a couple of oyster-shells. Sylvio Pellico, shut up in a lonely cell for years, fell in love with the voice of one of the incarcerated women, singing hymns amongst the unseen prisoners, and became enamoured of a pale, sallow girl, who sometimes brought him food, and whose plainness at first revolted him, but whom he at length learnt to regard

with passionate tenderness, and whose distress of mind about some one whom she loved filled him with the most heartrending sympathy. The bedridden patient finds amusement, if wealthy, in observing the folds of the rich drapery or the pictures that adorn his bedchamber. The cottager watches the stains in his ceiling, or the thin pall of the spider floating from the corner of his hovel. We can be, all of us, "brought very low," as the poor say, in our search for interests and amusement.

Mrs. Petrel, Jasper's second wife, was in this predicament. She had the dignity of connubiality, and, like other dignities, she found it an honour barren of happiness. She was constantly irritated by the airs which her sister gave herself about her second husband and her son. They were two of the most perfect of created beings, the husband being only a few degrees inferior to the boy, who was the son of that deceased perfection the first husband.

With the deceased perfection we will not trouble ourselves; but his descendant was really a fine, handsome, intelligent youth of

eleven years when Miss East had taken Mr. Petrel for her mate ; most carefully nurtured, fond of his mother, and with a large amount of affection and respect for his stepfather.

The Rev. Jasper Petrel had not gone through his fifteen years of married life without many "trials," as he termed them. Trial the first was the incessant bickerings between his daughter Mary and her stepmother ; this was a prolonged trial. His dislike to his wife made him half-hearted in the reproofs she urged him to give his daughter when Mary was impertinent to Mrs. Petrel. The girl perceived this, and, with feminine tact, knew how to wound the self-love of the lady, and to detect her small hypocrisies.

At length Mary attracted the attention of a junior partner in a brewery, who asked her in marriage.

His income was sufficient for the present, and promised increase for the future—but the man was in trade, and Mrs. Petrel said she could never sanction such a union.

Poor Mr. Petrel had felt the miseries of

poverty so keenly that he would willingly have consented to barter the dignity of Mary's having been well descended for an income which *she* would consider wealth.

Mary saw the hesitation, and that her father could make no valid objection to her choice. She foresaw that her father would get out of the difficulty both of giving his consent and giving a dowry if she acted with promptitude and decision ; consequently, one morning she did not appear at breakfast. That hour had become a late one, since the death of poor Margaret, who insisted on reading prayers to the household at eight o'clock a.m. every day.

"There is no tea in the caddy," said Mrs. Petrel to her footman ; "go to Miss Petrel and desire her to refill it."

The man came back, with an air of profound gravity, after the lapse of five minutes ; "Miss Petrel is not downstairs yet, ma'am."

Mrs. Petrel paid good wages—hence the fact of this placid composure. An underbred servant is given to grinning when anything amuses him, and otherwise showing his

appreciation of the facts which come under his cognizance.

"Desire Sarah to call Miss Petrel down immediately," said the lady.

"Miss Petrel, madam, is not, Sarah tells me, in her room, nor seemingly was it occupied last night."

"Not in her room! go and desire Mr. Petrel to come here *directly*."

"Mr. Petrel, madam, will be down in a few minutes. Sarah filled his bath an hour ago——"

"Gone off with that brewer, and disgraced the name of Petrel for ever! Fancy what will be my feelings when Fanny knows that my step-daughter has become Mary Tyrie, the brewer's wife!"

The magistrate's ex-widow was the Mrs. Grundy of her sister.

Mary was properly "cut" by her father and stepmother for her low marriage, and did not trouble herself at all on the subject. She appeared at church at the end of the honeymoon, which the young couple had passed at the Isle of Wight, in the richest of poplins, and the most delicate of bonnets. When her

worthy father went rustling his silk gown by the pew in which she stood, she gave him a sly glance out of the corner of her eye, which he caught, and to which he responded by as much of a smile as he dared to permit to appear in a place so holy and in the presence of a wife so tyrannical, and so fully possessed with a notion of her own value, and of the value of her three thousand a-year.

Mrs. Petrel conceived a venomous hatred to Mary, and a determination to mortify her, both now and hereafter ; consequently, like the ass and the thistle, for want of better, she took little Margaret, the infant whose birth caused her mother's death, under her special protection, and was determined to have a crop of perfections growing up in this little blossom of a dead trunk which should equal those which her sister Clarinda was never weary of emphasizing in her own son.

The fifteen years of " trials " to Mr. Petrel had brought in one of their seasons that besom of destruction, scarlet fever, and had rid him of his too great abundance of progeny ; in truth, only great Mary and little Margaret

had been left out of the family, once so numerous that poor Mrs. Petrel had regretted the presence of her eldest born, because she could not lodge him comfortably.

Nature produces a crop of five or seven little apple blossoms, and strikes off generally so many that but one or two are left on the tree, and with human creatures her process seems somewhat similar. Plague, pestilence, and famine and war, are the agents counted on by political economists for preventing the over population of the world. In the opinion of these gentlemen, Providence is like the fashionable barber mentioned in the *Tatler*, who, having the luxuriant hair of two young ladies to dress, did the best he could with half the quantity of each, and ruthlessly cut away the remainder.

Mr. Petrel at first thought it dreary to see the rooms containing so many little untenanted beds ; but he was consoled first by time, and then by his diminished expenses. In fact, he was able to maintain himself quite in luxury on the funds of his living, now that the claims on his income were so much reduced. He managed to buy a phae-

ton and a couple of horses, and rivalled his wife in the neatness of his "turn-out." Horses are far more satisfactory than children. If one's pocket gets low, a horse may be turned into cash, but a child is a never-ceasing expense, from dawn till dusk—that dusk which parents live not, as a rule, to witness.

So it happened that, several children having been removed by death and one by marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Petrel might have lived a more tranquil life, except that some tempers are like yeast, always in a state of fermentation.

This did not disturb the happiness of little Margaret, who, by some mysterious freak of nature, resembled her dead brother Edgar; his image had been stamped by terrible anxiety on the mind of her mother before the birth of the infant whose life meant her mother's death.

Mrs. Petrel the second had never seen Edgar, whose memory she disliked, because he had been so highly praised for his gallantry. She had said spitefully that he had seemed to deserve the term applied to him,

with an accent on the second syllable—but talk about syllables and accents is always puzzling, and no one understood her. The likeness was easily accounted for; Edgar resembled his mother; Margaret resembled her mother and her elder brother. She was very handsome, and so like her niece and her namesake, the daughter of Pleasance, that, apart, the difference was scarcely apparent. As her physical charms bloomed towards womanhood, Mrs. Petrel grew more and more proud of her. As the household at the Vicarage had increased first in comfort and then in luxury, visits had been paid by Clarinda with her boy to Jane and her adopted girl, who called her mamma, a title which the other children had passively but steadily refused to allow.

On these occasions the boy and girl played together as much as their different tastes and occupations permitted. The boy was sweet-tempered and patronizing, and used to make boats for little Margaret and swim them in the small pond at the bottom of the orchard, or get eggs and string them for an ornament for her nursery; he also drew pictures for her

of her old Stanch, the Skye terrier, sometimes crouched at Margaret's feet, sometimes sitting on his haunches with his fore paws pendent with an air of begging, which might have wrung bread and butter and cake out of a little girl's heart of stone. A large calico scrap-book was purchased to contain these choice works of art.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Good instruction is better than riches.”

WILLIAM PENN.

MRS. PETREL was a woman of ordinary intelligence and a narrow mind. She had no accomplishments, except a smattering of French, which had been so imperfectly acquired that it could not be communicated to her step-child. She was much of the opinion of the cottager who, when the wife of a clergyman wished to teach the woman's clever little girl arithmetic, refused to permit her daughter to learn to count above twenty. “ There's five fingers here,” she said, “ and five there,” indicating her hands ; “ five toes here, and five toes there,” pointing to her feet ; “ that is twenty, altogether ; nobody need know more, and my girl shan't !” When, however, Fanny

said the girl ought to be instructed, and Mrs. Petrel began to think of a governess—a vexed question in a household. Mrs. Petrel was difficult to please. “She must not be beautiful, or even pretty, because Mr. Petrel might possibly make comparisons between the mature aspect of his lawful love and the new-comer. She must not be cleverer than the lady of the house; she must not be sweet-tempered, or little Margaret might prefer her to the step-mother.

At length she obtained a plain and rather dull young woman, who struck the piano as if the instrument needed hammers both inside and out, who knew a little French and a little German, and pretended to draw in water-colours.

With Miss Spencer Mrs. Petrel was perfectly satisfied. She had been, she said, most highly recommended, which was a fact, the recommendation having come from a lady who was tired of her uselessness and inanity. She was of little value to a pupil, but then she did no harm, what more could any one desire of an inmate in a matrimonial home?

Parents who live in a city or its suburbs are able to give their children greater advantages than country gentlemen and clergymen. They can obtain the tuition of persons who have been successful in their own specialities, and having been thoroughly well grounded in their professions, can impart knowledge successfully. A governess may be a charming young woman, but a female "admirable Crichton" is a *lusus naturæ*. It follows that whilst Margaret, the aunt, grew up with a very ordinary amount of accomplishment, Margaret, the niece, had succeeded in making an unusual progress in French, German, Italian, and dancing.

CHAPTER X.

“Use great providence in choosing thy wife, for from thence will spring all thy future good or evil.”

THE sisters, Clarinda and Jane, had tacitly made up their minds that the boy and girl should marry when they grew up. His fortune would be ample, inherited from his paternal estates, when he became of age, and Mrs. Petrel announced that if Margaret married according to her wishes, she would endow her with part of her own income, and leave the residue to her step-daughter at her death, consequently Miss Petrel was considered as a desirable match by those who were cognizant of the circumstances.

But we are most concerned with Pleasance and her daughter.

Ambitious longings filled the breast of the

little old dancing-master since he had led the charming pupil through a minuet. It was Madame Thierry's custom to give a ball at the close of every vacation. Sometimes the pupils had represented in the drawing-room before a green curtain some of the plays written by Madame de Maintenon to amuse the pupils of Saint Cyr. This was considered a very laudable exercise of the young people's French, but the parents, who were not accustomed to a foreign tongue, had found the plays rather dull, and preferred to see the children dance. Now Monsieur Dappert wished to renew the entertainment for the sake of exhibiting his own dancing in the minuet with Margaret Petrel. Madame Thierry consented, provided a part should be provided for her. M. Dappert, had not anticipated this encumbrance on his idea, but he saw that it must be submitted to if any way was to be made in the undertaking. Madame also made another stipulation, that some English scholar should overlook the composition to avoid Gallicisms, which might create a smile.

Here the project nearly fell to the ground, Monsieur Dappert declaring that his English

was "parfait," which madame did not deny, but said that the little boys in the street called out, "There goes a Frenchman!" when monsieur spoke to them in passing.

After a struggle the desire for authorship subdued the rebellion of injured vanity, and the old man consented that Mr. Syer should be asked to read the little play, or, rather, the short dialogues, which were to usher in the different dances of the various pupils.

Mr. Syer had felt his vanity deeply wounded by Pleasance's rejection some twelve years previously, for neither man nor woman ever quite forgets such personal mortifications, and to prove that he did not care in the least, he proposed immediately after to the youngest Miss Peterson, and was indefatigable in trying to prove to himself that he loved her excessively. A series of strenuous efforts, which, from their vehement nature, resulted in failure, for love springs voluntarily, and will not exist in any forcing process.

Miss Helen Peterson had suspected Mr. Syer's attachment to the beautiful widow. The fact of the proposal had never been even hinted at by Pleasance or her friend, but

when the unfair Helen and Mr. Syer were first engaged, the lady was anxious to find out whether her suspicions had been correct, and asked the question of her affianced, and was unprepared for the affirmative which he honestly uttered; then the lady sulked so long and disagreeably, that poor Mr. Syer began to doubt whether it were altogether desirable to unite himself to a partner so infirm in temper. Miss Helen saw she had gone too far, and became sweet as honey again, resolving that as she could not repay her vexation on Mr. Syer, she would not forget to inflict all the small injuries society permits on the unoffending Pleasance.

There are women who resemble the Ashantees in war, who lurk in thick recesses of domestic concealment, as the savage does in the bush, dart out and wound an enemy to the death, if possible, and then, having shot their venom, disappear to a safe distance.

Mr. Syer said nothing of the nature of the request which had been made to him. He had a little air of pleased conceit on his face when he came in one day with a roll of paper tied up carefully in his hand, and said that a

literary parishioner had begged him to overlook a manuscript of his writing. Great trash, no doubt, but he could scarcely say no when compliance would cost nothing but a little time and patience. As he read he became interested. M. Dappert was an excellent English scholar when he was not required to give utterance to his sentences, therefore the small play was written in good English, and few could detect any Gallic construction in the well-constructed periods.

His old brain was nearly turned by all the contrivances to which he was compelled to resort to carry out his darling plan. He had one end of the dancing-room for the erection of his low stage, the ceiling not admitting of a high one. This he hired. Madame rebelled at the notion of scenes; whilst, with the cherishing love that inspires a fond mother for her new-born infant, M. Dappert longed to do honour to his brain by the most fitting accessories which could be attained.

"I need only have two scenes," he said, piteously: "a set scene at the back; and a couple of side scenes to open."

Madame gave way graciously; and then

the little Frenchman hurried off to London to select what he wanted. When he had settled it all to his satisfaction, madame suggested a possible dilemma :

“Suppose the ladies in the small house overlooking the sea, should refuse to allow Miss Petrel to act ; and, there was another difficulty, would M. Dappert represent in his own person all the males requisite in the piece ; and, if not, where was another to be obtained, who would not be objected to by the friends of the young ladies who were the *dramatis personæ* ?”

At first the old gentleman stamped up and down the room, and twisted his fingers in his sparse locks, as if he meant to remove them entirely from his head. Then came a sudden gleam of consolation.

“Ladies were not now so absurdly strait-laced. The best and noblest ladies in the land did not disdain to take part in private theatricals. Of course they must act with gentlemen, or they could not produce any illusion in the scenes.”

The manager and manageress were on the horns of a dilemma. Either they must ask a

young lady to put on masculine attire, or they must permit the introduction of a youth as well as a veteran amongst the corps dramatique.

Madame Thierry was perplexed.

M. Dappert, tearful—

“Ah! I shall not have my divine minuet after all!”

“Yes, yes, you shall, monsieur. Only, pray do not talk; when you do, I cannot think. The best plan will be to call on all the ladies, having first discovered a desirable young man of good fortune and expectations, and asked if he would be willing to take the lover's part. Then I will consult each individual lady as to her opinion, giving each to understand that the whole affair shall be given up if she disapprove. Seeing that their sons and brothers will attend the ball afterwards, it seems like straining at gnats and swallowing camels if they do.”

This plan having been decided on, a lady, whose sons attended the dancing academy, presided over mostly by Monsieur Dappert, was duly consulted by Madame Thiery, as to whether her eldest son would

take part in a short dialogue, which was to usher in the dancing.

This was the innocent aspect in which the artful dancing mistress presented the subject.

Mrs. Knight did not know : she would ask Jack.

Jack was summoned. He was short, and clumsily made, with a turned-up nose, and black sparkling eyes, with a look of irresistible fun in his face.

Madame saw it would never do. His brother, who was younger, was good looking. Had learnt dancing with Mr. Knight ; but though he was willing to do "anything in the saltatory way" to please madame, he declared he could not remember three words of any sentence consecutively.

"I, for my own part, madame, regret that I cannot be your knight, to make a pun on my own name. A squire I might manage to be if the dialogue were burlesque."

"I have no doubt of your powers, sir ; but I fear that they would not suit what I require, which is sentiment."

"What can we do for madame ?" asked the good-natured lady of the house.

"I've hit it," cried he, triumphantly. "We will ask Forrester, smooth-skinned as wax—fair as a lily—slender as a poplar—the handsomest spoony man in the three kingdoms. He is a good fellow, enough. Likes me, which is a good proof of it. If the missus approves, I'll send for him."

The "missus" smiled blandly.

"Is he altogether a good boy?" asked Madame Thierry.

"Well brought up, and rich! A very pink of perfection, madame: only so very strait-laced that I doubt his considering it prudent to trust himself in the presence of so many petticoats. I do not pretend to be so over goody myself, and he likes me from love of contrast. Were it not that nature had vividly written droll on my face, I would be your very humble servant for the part. Monsieur Dappert could not make me a serving man for the occasion—a cutter of capers—a joker of jokes?"

Madame smiled, and doubted—one youth amongst her maidens would be a terrible innovation—what would the world say to two?

Jack Knight had a smile also on his face thinking,

“She cares not much if she increase the number,
Not finding that additions much encumber.”

Madame had another difficulty. What would M. Dappert say to the added *rôle*. She said benignly that she would consult the author.

“There would be an advantage in my performing, madame. My friend is a very modest man. He may have his scruples about appearing to represent the whole male sex in his own person, madame. I can assist in bearing the brunt of admiration.”

“You are very kind—very droll—I will speak to my friend, M. Dappert.”

And so the matter was left undecided.

Madame Thierry first bent her steps to the dwelling of Mrs. Denny in the Dockyard. She, if she liked the idea, would influence many families of the pupils. Consequently she was rather nervous as to her success.

Mrs. Denny was anxious to know more about the new pupil, and the stately lady

who had chaperoned her, and received Madame very graciously.

Madame explained that she was anxious to make the next assembly of her pupils very brilliant, and instead of Madame de Maintenon's sacred dramas, to have some scene representation in which all the pupils should display their proficiency in dancing. It would be merely a short dialogue between one or two of the pupils and Monsieur Dappert, and thus the necessary changes in the dances would be introduced.

"Fancy dresses of *course*," said Mrs. Denny.

"Certainement, eef you no see objection."

"I think it would be charming, my girls would look lovely as French peasants."

"That was my thought," said the artful dancing mistress, who had not previously entertained the idea, "dere dees objection, perhaps there must be two gentlemen, no dree — Monsieur Dappert and two more young — enfin, madame," cried Madame Thierry, talking French and English in a strange mixture, "you must have des jeunes filles avec des knickaire-bockaires, or you most

admit young gentlemen. There is no harm—Monsieur Jack Knight, and son jeune ami très riche, vera handsome.”

“My daughters could *not* show above the ankle, madame, that would not be proper; but there can be no more objection that I can see in the young ladies taking part in a dialogue on the stage with a young gentleman, than in dancing with him at the ball afterwards; but *my* girls cannot wear any dresses which reveal the ankles.”

“Ah! yes, I understand,” said Madame taking leave; with a load of anxiety lifted from her mind—“they have thick ankles, and are clumsy made,” she said to herself, as she descended the steps from Mrs. Denny’s house, as the door closed after her exit.

The consent of the different parents having been given, the little drama was all written out from M. Dappert’s MS. in a fine clerk-like hand, and copies given to such of the pupils as had parts sufficiently important to require them.

CHAPTER XI.

“And oft in dreams, invention they bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.”

Two dresses were necessary for Margaret's appearance on the stage—one a ball dress of the period of 1790; the two ladies Pleasance and Mrs. Heathdale expended all their energies on this dress.

“It will not require to be of very rich materials, I suppose,” suggested the latter to madame, on whom she had called to consult.

“*Note riche?*” cried the irate French woman, “*note riche!* what have you?” meaning, what do you intend by saying not rich, “for behold, the silk is poor, no gloss, no shine on the folds. *Tenez, j'ai la parure de ma grand-mère, elle était svelte comme mademoi-*

selle, elle était bien à la cour de Marie Antoinette. De headdress, de lappets, de dentelle, très riches. Il faut acheter une jupe of satin, vat you call primrose for de front. I will call on you this evening, to try mademoiselle in de toilette."

In the evening, madame drove up in a fly, with her ancient treasures. She was received by the three women with a solemnity befitting the occasion. So much is human nature subject to changes, that the two hearts which had suffered such a shock that it seemed as if the whole of their subsequent lives must be embittered by its violence, were now all eager about the folds of a flounce or the fall of a lace ruffle.

The original petticoat of primrose satin had been stained, and its texture must be imitated in the best way possible with the materials of the present century.

At the bottom of the petticoat, Mrs. Heathdale was to embroider auriculas, applied in purple velvet, with the rings of white represented by yellow powder fixed by gum. Primroses, moss roses, and their leaves formed the clusters. Their

bunches being raised from the surface of the satin, produced a rich effect both of colour and form. The stained petticoat did very well for a trial as to the appearance of the whole dress.

Madame drew Margaret's dark hair up over a cushion, and having fastened it with long pins, and drawn it as smooth as the natural ripples of the tresses permitted, the whole structure was powdered, and the brilliant effect of the white head-dress on her eyes and eyebrows, was marvellous.

Eastern nations know the charm of white contrasted with dark eyebrows and eyes. The embroidered skull-cap, fitting tightly over the top of the forehead, with the graceful folds of linen depending each side of the face and round the head, form an attire unrivalled in simplicity and grace. "She shall be brought in to the king in a vesture of needlework," referred no doubt to the charming dresses worn in the east at the present day.

Pleasance and Mrs. Heathdale looked with admiration on the idol they had adorned.

"She want note de rouge," said madame.

"I fear she would want it a long time be-

fore she would have it," said Mrs. Heathdale.

"My mother, may I look at myself?" Margaret whispered.

They had been so intent on dressing her, that they forgot she had no glass in the room which could convey the reflection of her appearance.

"Yes: I forgot you had not seen yourself, dear child!"

With this permission Margaret snatched up a bed-candle, and was rushing up to her own little mirror, when madame cried out,

"Ah! you vill spoil all your head, de poudre fall oaf, de cushion fall down. Il faut faire venir de hairdresser to make it go neat."

Pleasance signed to Margaret to return, and reappeared with the largest glass the small house contained. The act was repaid to Pleasance by the pleased look which called a deeper bloom to the cheek of the girl, and a brighter sparkle to her eyes.

"Ah!" said madame, sighing, "vere will we find beauty often in perfection after sixteen? You gain intelligence older, you gain

finesse ; there is more inside, but the outside is frayed with the wear and tear of the world."

Mrs. Heathdale did not like Margaret to be made so much aware of the splendour of her loveliness.

"What you say, madame, is an additional reason for a girl improving her mind, for if the beauty fades after seventeen, on what can she depend but her intelligence?"

Madame was not listening, she was detaching the wonderful lace lappets from the powdered head, and taking the pins from the hair, which was fastened by them to the cushion.

Pleasance was an hour and a half before they retired to rest, trying to brush the powder from her daughter's plentiful tresses.

The following morning Mrs. Heathdale and Margaret walked out to do some shopping. Small portions of velvets were to be purchased, and green chenille to form the moss of the rose-buds, and thread-sized wire to imitate the tremulous stems of their leaves. The sturdiness of their holdings is the greatest drawback from the illusion of artificial

flowers; madame knew this, and wished to obviate the ordinary clumsiness of the leaf stems.

Margaret was eager to make these purchases, but rather compunctious about leaving her mother, who seemed ill and dispirited.

"Why are you sad, mamma?" the girl had asked, seeing that the violet lids of her mother's eyes were charged with unshed tears.

"I think I have caught a little cold, dear, nothing else," said Pleasance, wiping her face.

Margaret went up to put on her hat.

"Why are you unhappy, my dear?" Mrs. Heathdale enquired.

"I should so like to have gone to the party, and seen Margaret act, and the dancing and the dresses, and all the people," said the mother, with a soft sob.

"Then make up your mind to come. Do not upset yourself for nothing. Pray come. Let me purchase a dress for you this morning. Indeed, dear Pleasance, you are too melancholy; but for me, Margaret might find the

house like a nunnery, with two lady abbesses, and one unfortunate companionless novice."

Pleasance wiped her eyes and spoke with a marvellous effort at calmness.

"I do not forget the past, my dear Mrs. Heathdale. Answer me this, honestly. Would any of the families you will meet come to the party did they know my antecedents—did they know *all*?"

Mrs. Heathdale was silent; she thought that if the women had hearts of flesh, and not of stone, and knew *all*, as Pleasance had emphasized it, they must pity a woman who had repented in metaphorical sackcloth and ashes a sin committed unconsciously, from deficiency of moral culture, and one whose subsequent life had been for fifteen years so immaculate; but she knew that women's hearts were made of stone as a rule, with regard to the peccant of their own sex, especially if there be any possession on the part of the guilty one which they have not and cannot attain, such as beauty, or wealth, or such an amount of income as would seem wealth to the passers-by on the other side.

The wounds made by thieves are not always

the worst to bear. There are mental scars, which rankle long beneath their depths, and which give way and reveal the torture going on below the surface, when their existence is unsuspected.

She was silent. Pleasance went on in desperation—

“I will not appear in society under false colours. People shall not have the right to say that they never would have associated with such a black sheep had they known her character ;” and Pleasance sobbed till her delicate frame was shaken by the convulsions of sorrow.

Mrs. Heathdale knew but one comfort. She caressed mutely the golden-tressed head, which leaned itself despairingly against her friend’s arm, and begged her to compose herself for Margaret’s sake.

Margaret’s step was heard on the stairs. Pleasance silently pointed to the door, meaning that Mrs. Heathdale should take her daughter away without allowing her to enter the room.

The young girl had forgotten her mother’s dejection as she trod lightly along the path which

led to the more crowded part of Plymouth, where the shops were clustered; but before the different tints of the velvets, satins, and chenilles were properly matched, Mrs. Heathdale, whose memory was burthened by the dejection of Pleasance, complained of being weary, and told Margaret to try in a different part of the town for some fine-drawn wire, covered with white floss silk; *she* would prefer to return home.

Margaret consented at once. To a very healthy, light-hearted girl, the long walk presented a delightful anticipation. She was accustomed to walk alone, and, to confess the truth, every walk was something of a triumph.

"I cannot tell what pleasure Clara can take in walking on the west cliff for hours every day," said an obtuse mother, speaking to one daughter of another.

"I will tell you," responded the penetrating sister. "Clara's so beautiful, that every man, woman, and child follow her with their eyes. Clara has the look in her face of utter unconsciousness of the fact. She walks on with impenetrable gravity, for she is too well convinced of her loveliness to care to

indulge in small affectations, by which others less fortunate might try to enhance their charms. Her walking out means a continued but unconscious homage from every one she meets."

It was thus with Margaret. Her elastic tread, finely formed foot and ankle, her upright carriage and well-set head, her slender figure and brilliant complexion, made her a creature which the eye loved to rest on for a passing pleasure. On this occasion she was inspired by hope, for her errand was connected with her future appearance on the tiny stage of madame's drawing-room.

CHAPTER XII.

“Not know my voice ! O, time’s extremity !”

MARGARET was accustomed to the admiration of passing glances flung under the tantalizing hat or bonnet which shadowed and enhanced the brilliancy of her beauty ; but she was alarmed when she became aware that to-day a gentleman was following her pertinaciously.

She had caught a glimpse of a handsome, youthful face, who seemed about to speak to her : and seized with a panic, as Mrs. Heathdale always declared that no girl who conducted herself with propriety in the streets was ever addressed by strangers, she quickened her pace. When she had gone the length of a street, and believed she had distanced her pursuer, she looked back, and saw that he was coming after her with almost

equal speed. She knew the locality well, and believed that she could throw off this pertinacious young man by turning into a street which led to a church. It was certain to be open on that day, Wednesday, at eleven o'clock ; and though she was not in the habit of visiting that holy fane, except on Sundays, she thought now of the long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults with a feeling of expected relief from their coolness and solemnity, after her hurried flight.

"Sanctuary! in the nineteenth century," she said, smiling to herself.

There is nothing so likely to sober down our brainless ardours as the repose of a fine cathedral. Margaret knelt and prayed, and felt more tenderly to that dear, sad mother at home, and forgot the patterns of velvet and chenille which were in her pocket, and the grand occasion when they were to be exhibited. When, as the psalm was sung, and she stood up with the rest, she upraised her rich, plentiful voice, in the expression of the holy words selected, she became aware that a second was sustained by a man's voice not far off, in a pew behind her.

"A well-cultivated musician, certainly," she said to herself, having forgotten both her chase and her pursuer. When in the following verses she listened to him again, she became so entranced that she stopped singing. Immediately the voice was also silent.

With a little shame at having allowed her thoughts to wander from the sacred subject which trembled on her lips, but occupied not her thoughts, she finished the psalm, accompanied by the male voice to the end.

When the service was concluded, the organ burst forth in the jubilant Hallelujah chorus. To Margaret's ear the final word sounded as if a human voice united itself with the peal of the Hallelujah, turning it into *Margareeta*.

"It must be fancy," she cried ; yet she was seized with a dread of turning round lest she should see the person who had followed her, and might renew his chase when she had left the church. The *Margareeta* must be all nonsense ; for were it he, he could not know her name. The idea that she was haunted by any one made her heart beat quicker ; and as she had delayed, in her perturbation, too long already, she walked forward to escape the

necessity of turning, intending to go out at the door at the further end, and not at the grand entrance by which she had come.

She walked forward, overtaking some amongst the elder part of the congregation, and tried to pass a paralytic lady, who was supported on the arm of a stalwart gentleman. This she found to be impossible without an amount of rudeness, of which she found herself incapable. She was compelled, therefore, to move as slowly as did the invalid; and presently she heard a voice, close to her ear, singing playfully, as if accompanying the organ, "*Margareeta! Margareeta! Hallelujah! Margareeta!*"

She did not respond, but pressed closer to the party in front.

"Why don't you turn round and speak to me?" said the whisper. "And what, [in heaven's name, are you doing here, all alone? Have they sent *you* to look after *me*?"

"Oh, mercy!" cried Margaret to herself. "This dreadful man is certainly mad! I shall cry out. I shall appeal to the pew-opener."

He said no more for a few moments, being probably astonished at her obstinate silence.

They had reached the small arched door now. The congregation, even the most tardy, poured forth to return to the intermitted occupations of busy life. The youth would not allow himself to be shaken off. He advanced hastily to Margaret's side, and said, seizing her hand and passing it through his arm—

“My little darling! you are not going to escape me. What is the meaning of all this affected coyness—eh! Miss *Margareeta*? Does not that go well to the Hallelujah Chorus? I never tried it before, but, good heavens! who would ever have dreamed that your voice was so grand? And how tall and handsome you have grown, my child!”

Margaret walked with her head averted; she could see no one whom she knew, or she would have applied to them for protection.

“He must be quite mad,” she murmured, still averting her face.

At length she arrived near a shop, at which her mother was in the habit of dealing, and her courage revived.

She caught hold of the lintel of the door as she reached it, and turning to her

persecutor, with eyes aflame with beautiful anger, she cried—

“What do you mean by this infamous conduct, sir, insulting a lady thus? Let go my arm, or I shall appeal to the master of the shop, and give you in charge to the first policeman.”

“What—what—is your name?” cried the youth, hesitating and blushing. “Margaret Petrel, surely?”

Yet he was doubtful. The creature before him was his Margaret, transfigured to surpassing beauty. It is true he had not seen his step-cousin for three years and a half, which, combined with the extraordinary stride made by young ladies between the child and the woman, might account for some of the alteration; still, he was gazing at her angry face, with a bewildered air, repeating, “Surely you are Margaret Petrel?”

“Poor youth,” said Margaret, inwardly, “his brain is evidently confused, and he looks so perturbed,” and a pitying smile played over her blooming cheek.

“I fear you are not well,” she said, with a sudden change in her mood. “I *am* Mar-

garet Petrel, but I cannot think how you should know it, for I never saw you before."

"But there can be but one Margaret Petrel," insisted the young man.

"Very likely," replied Margaret, smiling, and looking even more beautiful in her serenity. "I am that lady, and now as you must be convinced that you have made some blunder, permit me to proceed without further annoyance."

"Pardon me," continued the gentleman, "either I am dreaming, or I have gone mad. Tell me whether you do not live at Birchland Rectory!"

"I assure you that I have lived in the outskirts of this place ever since I was born, and I never heard of Birchwood Rectory in my life. Good morning."

And Margaret walked into the shop, whither he dared not follow her, and after speaking a few words to the man behind the counter, passed through the shop into another street, and returned home, rather disgusted by the adventure of the morning.

When she reached the house she thought of her mother's sad, tearful face, when Mar-

garet had left her, and was relieved by seeing her look up with a smile, as her girl entered, from the satin petticoat, on the seams of which she was sewing.

Mrs. Heathdale had purchased it, and brought it home with the sewing silk, knowing by sad experience how well grief was kept at bay by constant occupation.

If Pleasance felt sad at the notion that she should not be able to see Margaret in her splendid gear, she had the compensation of knowing how beautiful she would look, and in contributing to her beauty by the labour of her hands.

Margaret drew the pattern from her pocket, and tried the effect of the velvet intended to represent the auriculas. The women's faces bent down to look, and then drew back for a distant view, with heads rather turned on one side. The effect was pronounced to be perfectly satisfactory.

The consultations on the different shades of velvet for a time made Margaret forget all about her adventure. At length Mrs. Heathdale asked what had detained her so long. Had she had any difficulty in finding the

materials, and had she found it necessary to go farther than she had intended ?

"Dear godmamma, I went to church."

"To church !" cried both ladies.

"That was very good of you," added Pleasance.

"Yes — only —" said Margaret, "my prayers were as compulsory as those of old Daddy-long-legs. I went to Saint Margaret's to claim sanctuary ; a gentleman followed me, and as I could not get quit of him, I went into the church, and forgot him, till I began to sing, and then he began to sing a second to the psalm. I am sure it was he who sang, though he was behind me ; and his voice was magnificent."

"Bless me !" cried both ladies.

From living always together, they unconsciously used the same expressions in similar tones.

Pleasance had at first imitated Mrs. Heathdale ; now it was second nature.

"Mamma," said Margaret, "I quite believe the poor fellow is mad."

"Gone mad for your beauty, Miss Puss ?" asked the godmother.

"Ah! you need not scoff. You must know that after the service the organist played the congregation out to the music of the Hallelujah chorus. You know how loud that organ is. In the Hallelujah I distinctly distinguished a man's voice singing *Margareeta*, with every repetition of the original word."

"Oh, my dear, much vanity has driven you mad! Ever since madame built a kind of Tower of Babel on your head it has been gone astray."

"Indeed, godmamma, I could not help it. Don't scoff at me; let me finish my story. I hastened to get out of the church, but a poor paralyzed lady, with a son seemingly supporting one side, and a daughter on the other, blocked the way. This gave the stranger time to come up with me, and I heard him singing distinctly in my ear *Margareeta*, *Margareeta*! Does it not go well in the chorus? He called me 'darling,' and asked how I came here, and why I did not recognize him. He went on saying, 'You must be Margaret Petrel; how you are grown.' When I declared I had never seen

him before, he seemed very confused, and looked so bewildered, that I was full of pity for him. I fancy that he is quite mad, and had heard my name accidentally, and fancied he knew me. He asked me if my home was not at some rectory in another county, and he was more than ever disturbed, when I said I had lived here all my life."

"You shall not go out again alone," said Pleasance, anxiously; and trying to look severe.

"You should have called a policeman," observed Mrs. Heathdale.

"I should have done so," replied the girl, "but I did not see any."

"Well!" the ladies chorused, "you must stay at home if mad gentlemen follow you."

"Observe," said the caustic godmother, "that you yourself admit the insanity of the man. So we may suppose no one who had not taken leave of his senses would have followed you."

"I will not admit that, godmamma," replied the girl, laughing. "Your inference is a forced one."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue."

PLEASANCE had a satisfaction in store for her which she had not anticipated. Before Madame, and Monsieur Dappert could consent to the performance of the little piece, several rehearsals were to take place, and the last was to be gone through in every way as if the audience were present. But no one—not even the parents of the strings of girls and boys, who were to dance in all varieties of reels, cotillons, sarabands, hornpipes, boleros, fandangos, quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, and mazurkas—were to be admitted to the grand performance.

Mrs. Heathdale had an interview with madame privately, and told her of the natural anxiety Mrs. Petrel had to see her daughter's

performance ; but that since the death of her husband, she had steadily declined to go into society. Would madame permit her poor friend to be the solitary witness of the scene representation ?”

“Certainement ? O, yeas ! she comb. Vary glad her to see.”

Master Jack Knight was not permitted to exult in a comic part. Monsieur Dappert had not a notion of humour in his composition. The dignity of his profession did not permit the relaxation of a smile. However, Jack had the satisfaction of acting for his friend, who was confined to the house by a violent cold and sore throat.

“Croaks like a raven,” said Master Jack.

Monsieur Dappert was in despair, as he saw how much the substitute enjoyed acting the part.

“But that nose ! that nose ! he noe de sentiment,” he observed to madame, sadly, when some of the many rehearsals were concluded ; “and likewise,” added the melancholy author, “ve vant de contrast. Mees Petrel a les cheveux noirs ; and Monsieur Jack ees vat you call lampblack. Mees vill vair de poudre.

Ah ! bah ; les yeux sont de la même couleur. Seulement il a les yeux petits, green eyes, and elle les yeux grands comme la flamme."

Mr. Jack found that his occupation if not "gone," like Othello's, was going. He announced that Cassilis Forrester was nearly well; and would attend at the dress rehearsal on the following Tuesday. This was good news to the master of the ceremonies, and to madame. It gave the dignity of a straight nose, and removed the burlesque element of Master Jack's countenance.

Pleasance was glad to compromise matters by sitting alone in front of the stage as audience, till some of the servants stole in silently, and hid themselves in the shadows, when they thought their betters were too much occupied by the performance to make any objection.

In the first scene, which was a richly furnished dressing-room in an old chateau, a young lady is reclining by the fire, listening to her maid : who is narrating to her that this is the night, when, if a maiden pure in thought and deed go to fill her pitcher at the stream which flows through the neigh-

bouring forest, the Spirit of the Waters clothed in white will lift the vessel on to her head. If she has courage to stand still, and carry off her load without spilling any, her life will be prosperous. If, on the contrary, she allows the contents of the pitcher to fall, the accident will convey a sinister portent.

"Nannette!" says the fair Gabrielle, the mistress, "you would like to go and try, I am sure. I will not balk your wishes, my good girl. You shall go to the forest, and get there when the castle clock strikes twelve."

"Oh, mademoiselle! It is so cold outside, and the fire here is so comfortable. Whilst my kind mistress lives my happiness is assured. I have no curiosity for the future."

"Nonsense," replied the lady. "You *must* wish to know whether Manuel means to marry you or not."

Nannette sighed.

"Ah, lady! I do wish he would."

"Here, then, is a fine opportunity of testing his value. If your life is to be happy, of course that means that he will be true. You shall put on your shawl over your head, and your red cloak, and go at once. It only wants twenty minutes to twelve."

Nannette was driven to desperation.

"I should not be afraid if ma'm'selle came, too."

Gabrielle is too proud to admit that she is afraid.

"If you are such a coward that you have not courage to go alone, I will accompany you."

"Oh ! ma'm'selle, should any of the servants be still up, and see your ladyship walking out at such an hour !——"

"If so, they will only think that you and one of your companions are gone out to pray at the Image of our Lady of Sorrows for the safe return of Manuel from the war. Get me Lisette's red cloak, and a faded handkerchief to tie over my head, and we will go at once."

The scene changes to a woodland.

As they walk along, Gabrielle desires Nannette to teach her the "Invocation to the Spirit of the Waters," and, with a quavering voice, she began—

"Spirit of the mountain-spring,
I, a maiden pure and chaste,
All alone my pitcher bring,
Thy full-flowing stream to taste.

[“ From thy crystal chambers steal,
Through dim shadows glimmering bright,
Spirit, now thyself reveal,
Draped in folds of spotless white.

“ On my head the pitcher poise :
If no drop should overflow,
Love will crown my life with joys ;
Spilt, it would betoken woe.
Come, come, come !”

“ Now, ma’m’selle, if the spirit means to be propitious, you will hear her, or the echo, reply—

‘ Come, come, come !’

Hark ! did you hear anything ?”

“ No ; nonsense,” replies Gabrielle. “ It is only the water running.”

They stop for an instant, and the young lady whispers, looking off—

“ There is the lowest part of the stream. I see its broad expanse glittering in the moonlight. Do you go first, and then I will try my luck.”

“ I think, ma’m’selle, that I should not like to take precedence of your ladyship.”

“ We will go together,” says Gabrielle, with her teeth rather disposed to chatter.

"Oh! that will not do, mademoiselle. The rhyme says 'all alone.'"

"Nannette, I insist on your going."

"That is hard, ma'm'selle. Grand-dame I have heard say, that the spirit is very particular and nasty-tempered sometimes, and will strangle a girl if he don't approve of her."

"If you don't go I shall suspect that you have something on your mind—some prudent reason for not going near a severe judge."

"Oh! if you come to that, I can defy the spirit and all his works. So here goes."

So Nannette went on with an assured step for a few paces; and then peering through the trees, said—

"It's very dark here, ma'm'selle."

"Oh, nonsense! The moon is rising. It will be quite light in a few minutes—before you get there, in fact. *Go on.*"

As this was spoken imperatively, Nannette sighs and disappears. Gabrielle stands, listening to her departing footsteps; and at length becomes alarmed at hearing a shrill scream re-echoing from the path in the direction her maid has taken.

Presently she rushes back to her mistress.

"Ah ! ma'm'selle, save me ! Hold me tight ! Do not let me go, for a moment."

"Why, you are dripping with wet, child !"

"Ah ! I am a ruined girl ! The water is spilt all over me, and Manuel will never come back from the wars !"

"Tell me all about it," says Gabrielle.

"Well, miss, I went and said the verses ; and I thought I heard a strange, gruff voice, but I could not make out any words. I filled my pitcher, and turned my back, and waited for it to be lifted on to my head, never turning round ; for that, grand-dame says, would break the spell. Presently I heard a slight noise, which made my heart almost jump out of my stays. Something lifted the pitcher on to my head, and I put up my hands each side to keep it from falling, when the dreadful creature put his paws—I believe it was a bear—round my waist and shook me, growling dreadfully ; and I was so frightened that I upset the water, and ran back to you as fast as I could."

"I really believe it was all fancy, Nannette,

or your evil conscience. I shall go myself, and do you stay here."

"Oh! my lady, I cannot stay by myself. Pray do not go. I shall faint if I am left alone!"

"Better not faint, for there will be no one to see you. Wait here. I will soon unearth yon dreadful creature, who growls and hugs like a bear."

Nannette flings herself on the turf, and covers her face with her cloak. Gabrielle draws the hood of hers over her head, and trips off with the pitcher.

The scene closes, and the curtain drawing up, reveals the fountain with the decayed spout through which the water trickled.

Gabrielle, turning her back on the fountain, sang her incantation, according to the prescribed formula.

CHAPTER XIV.

"If ever words are sweet, what, what is song,
When lips we love the melody prolong!"

PLEASANCE had never seen a real theatre, and the painting of the scenes appeared to her magical. She was wrapped in profound attention at the conversation which was carried on between Margaret and Miss Denny, in the characters of Gabrielle and Nannette.

When Gabrielle stood by the fountain and sang her song, the mother's admiration made her breathless.

There was a moment's pause after the final word, thrice repeated, "Come!" when, from the recesses of the wood, a man's voice was heard, a rich and mellow tenor, singing the reply—

"In the caverns where I dwell,
Hidden from the light of day,
Maiden, I have heard thy spell,
And its potency obey."

Here a figure, wrapped in a dark Spanish cloak, came to the spot where the water trickled into the pitcher; and as he lifted the pitcher, he continued to sing—

"Careful I thy pitcher place
On thy knots of braided hair;
Grant me, in return, the grace
Once to touch that forehead fair."

As the figure sang the last two lines, it affected to give a stage kiss to Gabrielle's forehead.

"How *dare* you!" cried the young lady, turning round, but still supporting the unspilt pitcher and its contents. "Who are you?" cried the young heiress.

The youth flung off his cloak, and showed a fashionable dress of the period of Charles X.

"You are no spirit, after all!" cried the angry lady.

"Indeed, pretty maiden, I am not; but I *have* some, I assure you. I heard the conversation between you and your fellow-servant

as I was threading one of the woodland paths parallel to that in which you walked, and made up my mind to personate the spirit, and get a kiss for my pains."

"You were very impertinent," cried Gabrielle. "Pray, did you kiss Nannette?"

"Do you think she will be jealous if I did not?"

"I am sure I do not know."

"I did not kiss Nannette. In truth, my dear, I am rather particular on that point; besides, she had expressed so much reluctance to expose herself to my scrutiny, that I was wickedly inclined to terrify her, by simulating a bear in voice and grasp."

Margaret acted trepidation with marvellous success in this interview.

"I suppose," he added, "you are the young lady's attendant, and live up at the castle, eh? You are the upper housemaid, perhaps, and the girl you call Nannette is the underling."

"Just so; you have hit it," replied the young lady, in her assumed character of maid.

"I have heard a great deal of your young

mistress," said the gentleman. "I was half inclined to propose for her."

"Indeed. What did you hear?" asked the girl.

"Oh! they say that she is very plain—quite ugly, indeed. Ah; you need not toss your head. It is of your mistress they spoke, not of you, pretty one. Now come, tell me the truth, You see, my father is anxious for me to marry her. I really do not think I can. They say that she is a little awry in her figure."

"What an untruth!" cried Gabrielle.

"Ah!" said the gentleman, "you must know, of course, dressing and undressing her every day."

"Certainly I do that," said the pretended maid, "with a little help."

"Then she is straight?"

"As straight as I am, quite," retorted the lady.

The youth stood back and regarded her.

"I never saw a more charming figure. Then it is only her face that is plain."

"Tastes differ. I think that she is beautiful!"

"Ah! that is because you are naturally attached to her."

"Naturally! I love her better than any one else in the world."

"Dost thou think, pretty maiden, thou couldst love any one more than that young lady whom thou servest?"

"It would be difficult," replied the young lady, smiling. "I am so very much attached to the Lady Gabrielle."

"Now, if I were inclined to sacrifice myself, sweet maiden, and propose to that ugly girl, thou wouldst give me a good turn, wouldst thou not?"

"If I knew that you were of equal rank, monsieur. Young ladies cannot marry into the canaille. Might I request to know your name?"

"The Count de Courci, my pretty dear."

"Well born, then, and rich?"

"My father is still alive, gentle maiden. I must inherit a fine property after his death, an event for which I am not anxious, having a tenderness for the old gentleman; but till that undesired fact I am dependent on his wishes, and I confess to a desire to have a

rich wife, who would contribute to my moral perfection, by taking from me by her wealth the slightest half imperceptible thought of my father's future demise."

"And could you not love one who was poor?" Gabrielle asked, bashfully and coquettishly.

"Yes, were she well descended. I might love, but I could scarcely marry."

Gabrielle sighed.

"Farewell, Monsieur le Comte de Courci, I must return to the château."

"Ah, pretty child! shall we not meet again?"

"No, never again," replied Gabrielle. "I am poor, Sir Count."

The youth kneels and kisses the hand of the maiden.

"Thy hand, fair girl, may be brown—for the moon is a powerful neutralizer of colour—but its touch is like satin. Thy mistress can have given thee but a slight amount of work."

"I embroider my lady's slippers, tune her harp, and sing to her when she is sad."

"Truly, thy pipe has been well cultivated,

and well has deserved thy master's care ; it is so sweet and mellow."

Then the maiden trips off with her pitcher, and the youth informs the audience that he has fallen in love at first sight with the serving girl. Then the scene opens again. The trees have changed from spring to autumn. The youth, entering, is very sad. His father is determined that his son shall be married immediately.

Gabrielle enters, still in the disguise of a serving maiden.

"See, love," he cries, "the flowers have bloomed and withered since three months ago, when we first met by moonlight by the side of the wizard stream. The flowing water is narrowed since then. The heat is intense in the day, but the nights are heavenly. One thing has had no change, my love for thee, O Nannette ! When I think of thee, I feel inclined to wander away with thy hand in mine, forswearing kindred and rank and station, and future wealth, and labour with my hands for thy support and my own."

"Why is my lord troubled now ?" Gabrielle inquires.

“My father is determined to marry me to some high-born lady. Do not laugh, Nannette. He looks with contempt on all the mushroom nobility around him, however wealthy, and he declares that by a lady’s movements in a ball-room he can tell whether she is well descended and well brought up. There will be a magnificent entertainment at the château, and when the company are dancing, my father will criticise the young ladies, and the best performer he will select to be my partner for life, that is, if the lady should be willing. My father thinks that grace and beauty survived not the reign of Marie Antoinette, that the infusion of plebeian blood has vulgarised all families since the revolution of ’92.”

“If that be so, we are all much alike, my Lord. Let me come and dance before the old Marquis; I warrant me, I can cut a caper as high as any girl in the village. There is not one so strong in the ankles as I am, I shall please him if I have a chance.”

“Canst thou dance, pretty one?” asked the incredulous lover.

"Bravely. Oh! you would be pleased to see me jump about. Don't I do it lightly, that's all! oh! I can foot it featly."

"What is the name of thy dance?"

"The carmagnole," cried Gabrielle, triumphantly.

"Ah! my dear child, that would be fatal; never own that you know even the name of that fearful dance."

"Well! if the old gentleman be so particular," said the girl pouting, "perchance he would like my singing better. Listen! 'Aux armes! citoyens! Formez vos bataillons! Marchons, marchons, qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons——'"

"Hush! hush! my father would go mad. He worshipped the beautiful queen whose head those murderers cut off. His youth was spent in her court; no dancing is so stately and graceful now, he says, as that in which she performed herself. The revolution has flooded France with a torrent of vulgarity and vice. Women are now no longer high-bred, they have sprung from the gutter."

"Ah! you despise me, young gentleman,

because I am one of the people. You should not have begged me to meet you here ; it does not matter much, I am an honest girl, and I dare say some honest man will love me and marry me."

"What, thou little perfidious wretch ! canst thou contemplate a marriage with any one but—but a gentleman ?"

"If gentlefolks turn up their noses at poor folks, poor folks must do the best they can. Good-bye, Monsieur."

"Do not go, Nannette, thou wilt break my heart."

"Then mend it. If you are so miserable tell me this—will you be ashamed of me if I manage to borrow an old cast-off dress of my lady's, and come to the grand ball ; will you own me and dance with me before all the people, and say, I love this young serving girl better than all the grand ladies, and her alone I will marry ?"

"Ah, Nannette ! thou knowest not what small trammels of habit make things difficult, the lion was entangled in a trumpery net."

"Ah ! yes, Monsieur, the curé told me how

a little mouse gnawed the threads and got him out. However it shall be just as you please about owning me, but I shall be there."

CHAPTER XV.

“When bounding beauty’s train,
Link grace and harmony in happiest chain.”

THE next and final scene was a ball-room in the château. It was crowded with young folks in fancy dresses, and, as they were young, and had been taught a certain amount of grace, the effect was very charming. The old Marquis and the young Count received the guests as they arrived. He raised not his eyes from the youth; the youth was sad and pre-occupied, he trembled lest he should see his darling Nannette enter and claim his recognition.

Presently an old baroness, (Madame Thierry) comes in, conducting her niece, whom she introduces as the Lady Gabrielle d’Estoille. Her dark tresses are drawn to the

top of a high cushion and powdered, which gives her increased height and majesty ; her dress is magnificent, a costly string of large pearls surround her finely formed throat ; she responds only by bows to the addresses of the host and of his son, who does not recognise in the brilliant and haughty stranger the girl whom he loves.

The Marquis, charmed with her beauty, seats her by the side of him on a sofa, and the Baroness on the other, whilst various dances are performed by young people dressed in characteristic costumes of the country to which they belonged.

The Marquis politely dispenses compliments and commendation to the different groups as they perform, and each lady sitting as a spectator, on the following night, will believe that her daughter has been the particular dancer most admired by the master of the house. At length there is a pause ; the company are heated, and made somewhat breathless by the circles of a quick waltz—though to show any signs of fatigue will call down all kind of vituperations on their devoted heads and feet, after the entertainment is

over ; they show it in heaving chests and flushed brows, when the Marquis rises and after saying a few words to Gabrielle, he orders the orchestra to play, *Le Minuet de la Cour*.

Now "awful beauty puts on all her charms." She had been a perfect picture of still life before ; now she adorns herself with the "poetry of motion," as dancing has aptly been designated.

Mr. Cassilis Forrester when the minuet began, desirous of seeing it from the best point of view, left his place on the sofa where he had sat as the son of the house, and moved down silently through the dancers to the spot where a lovely woman in black was looking on with large melancholy blue eyes, conveying an expression of exquisite tenderness, at the dancing of the minuet.

Mr. Forrester seated himself by her side, and regarded the performers in silence for some time. When Margaret sunk and rose again on the tips of her toes steadily in the curtsy to the audience, the lady with the golden hair drew a long breath of relief.

"What a graceful dance is the minuet,"

said the young man in a low voice. "I never saw it danced before. That young lady has the most exquisite face and figure I ever saw."

"Do you think so," said Pleasance, turning on him a face of sweet thankfulness, "I admire her very much myself, but then I may not be a good judge."

"Every one must admire her," replied the youth hotly, "who has eyes to see, and sense to comprehend how every expression of her countenance follows the intention of the dance. Do you know the young lady's name?"

Pleasance gave a little laugh, and replied, "Yes, her name is Margaret—Margaret Petrel."

"That is most singular," said Cassilis.

Pleasance looked round inquiringly.

"You mean that the name is singular?"

"It is singular," answered her companion ; "but that is not what I meant. I know a young lady called Margaret Petrel, so like this minuet dancer, that she might be another flower from the same stem. She is smaller, less well developed, less blooming, and with-

out that young lady's cultured grace. I am curious to know if this Miss Petrel has any blood relations in ——shire."

Pleasance was silent. She had but a very vague idea where Edgar's relations lived; they were nothing to her; he never spoke of them to his wife. The remembrance of Birchwood after his mother's death was one of unmingled pain, and he shrank from any reference to his home.

Presently the minuet concluded, and bang, bang, bang of the orchestra announced that the Marquis and his fair guest were about to coquet the lively measures through the gavotte.

"I did such a stupid thing yesterday," said the youth to his neighbour, who seemed very sympathizing. "I am very intimate with my cousin Margaret, and spent great part of every year with her, till I went to Cambridge; and yesterday, seeing her, as I thought, unexpectedly, I claimed her acquaintance, and got properly snubbed for my pains. Nothing could be further from my thoughts than to offend any lady, particularly any one who possesses so extraordinary a re-

semblance to the girl whom I love. I shall not be quite easy till she forgives me; but I must go now and take my place."

Mr. Forrester only just succeeded in reaching the sofa before Monsieur Dappert, as the Marquis, turned round to seek him. Adolphe starts at seeing Nannette enter in the peasant's dress, which, gleaming through the trees, had often made his heart beat wildly. She is looking very plain, he thinks, and moves awkwardly, compared to the beautiful creature whom his father leads by the hand. The Marquis takes from a box, which is carried by Nannette, a costly lace veil, and a wreath of orange flower, and crowning with them Gabrielle's head, places her hand in the hand of his son. Adolphe, confused, looks at Nannette, who regards her mistress with some interest in the flow of the veil, but with no other idea in her thought. Gabrielle, bowing her veiled head, whispers, "Adolphe, shall I dance the carmagnole?"

He kneels and kisses her hand, the dancers form themselves into groups, and the curtain falls.

"It is well done," cried Monsieur Dappert ;
"and there is no complain parceque they all
do dance in their turns. And now, madame,
a leetle glass for each of negus or eau sucrée,
and then wrap up them well for fear they
take cold, and no dance to-morrow night.
Young ladies and young gentlemen, your per-
formance does you credit. Miss Petrel, you
are divine ; you are de muse of de dance.
Monsieur Forrester, I thank you mouche.
You have acted all your life ; you are so con-
versant with it, and not frightened."

Mr. Forrester owned to being well accus-
tomed to act in private theatricals. He
watched for an opportunity of walking home
with Miss Petrel, or of handing her to her
carriage, but she disappeared mysteriously,
and on looking for his new acquaintance in
black, she had disappeared also. "At any
rate," said he to himself, "this was only a
dress rehearsal, I shall act with her again to-
morrow night," so he bowed to madame and
monsieur, and departed.

"Oh, mamma!" cried Margaret, as the
cabriolet drove to their home.

"Stop, my dear ; pray draw this shawl

over your chest, you will catch your death."

"How did you like it? Do tell me."

"I thought your dancing was beautiful, and I never saw you look so handsome in my life. But I have had an adventure. It is quite right that I should—I go out so seldom. I have talked with your madman, and he is as sane as I am."

"You don't say so. Then it is the same. I thought it was he, only seeing a gentleman in a walking dress, and in a court dress with powder, makes so great a difference. He acted very well, especially as he had had no rehearsal, but I do not know how that is a proof of his sanity—tell me. How very strange that he should convince you that he was of sound mind in so short a time."

"He began to talk of the minuet and the graceful character of the dance; then he asked if I knew your name, which made me smile a little. I said you were called Margaret Petrel. Then he told me that he had a cousin of that name, of whom he was very fond, and with whom he had spent most of his childhood. I think he said he had not

seen her for some little time, and the likeness between the two Margarets was so remarkable, that he had made himself ridiculous by speaking to you, and that he had been properly snubbed for his pains."

"It is strange any one should resemble me so much—quite like a romance ; something in the manner of poor L. E. L. in 'Francesca Carrara,' only there the duplicates are masculine. Not very complimentary, mamma, is it, to have one's double running about in the world. Perhaps if in future time any lover comes to me, he may see the other Margaret and leave me."

"But," replied the mother, "the inconvenience would bring the remedy, for if the likeness be so perfect, he would have no motive for doing so."

Soon after, they reached home, and Mrs. Heathdale welcomed Margaret, and gave her some tea, and when she had retired to her rest for the night, Pleasance told her the story of the handsome youth who had so much admired their girl, and of the extraordinary likeness he had found in her to a cousin of his, to whom he seemed to be

attached. Both ladies found much at which to wonder, and Mrs. Heathdale was disquieted.

“Had your husband any relations—cousins?”

“I do not know,” murmured Pleasance, with a scared look; “I never heard him mention any. He had little brothers and one sister called Mary.”

“It does not signify,” said Mrs. Heathdale; “there may be many Petrels in the world, and Margarets too. If the youth had not seen his Margaret for some time, he may have fancied the likeness to be greater than really existed; if, indeed, it were not a story invented to excuse a piece of impertinence offered to an unprotected girl, of which he was ashamed when he met her in the society of his equals.”

With this consolation, such as it was, Pleasance went to bed. When Margaret was an infant, a little bed had been placed by that of her mother, who generally fell asleep with her hand and arm outstretched over the rosy child, that she might hush her off to sleep again when she was restless.

Pleasance loved all mothers and all offspring, for the sake of little Margaret and herself. In disturbing a small cupboard under the stairs, where wood was kept when Margaret was a baby, Pleasance discovered a little terrified mouse, sitting with glistening eyes amongst her little new-born tribe, who were pursuing her teats with their blind faces. Pleasance closed the door gently, and, going to the larder, cut some bread and cheese, and poured out a saucer full of milk, and placed it within the reach of the frightened mother; then she locked the door, and mislaid the key till such time as she thought Mrs. Mouse must have ceased to nourish her children, and consequently to care for them.

Pleasance was very sorry to have done an act so unhousewifely; she ought to have called the cat, no doubt, and made short work of the small creatures and their mother; but she could not. The eyes of Pleasance were such as loved whatever they looked upon, if the objects contemplated were feeble and helpless.

When she went to her room she looked on Margaret as she slept. A larger bed had

taken the place of the small crib, which had held the infant, and the daughter from choice occupied the same room as her mother. Now, as she gazed on the sleeping beauty, the girl unconsciously smiled.

The mother uttered a fervent prayer for her daughter's happiness, kneeling by her side; and when she again rose, she stooped and kissed the hand which lay outside the sheet.

Something in that touch awoke a train of memories in the sleeper. He had kissed her hand at the conclusion of the representation. She opened her eyes and saw Pleasance.

"Mamma," she murmured, "are you sure I did it well?"

"Admirably."

"Did I look as I should have done?"

"I never saw you appear to so great an advantage."

"I wonder if *he* thought so," said Margaret, turning round on her pillow to dream again.

Pleasance did the work of a lady's-maid, and placed the dress which Margaret had taken off on the bed in the unoccupied room, and pulled the crushed auriculas and rose-buds into their proper places.

Both she and Mrs. Heathdale had grudged Margaret the wearing of a dress which had cost them so much time and thought, when no one would see it ; but Monsieur Dappert had been inexorable. He knew that folks must be accustomed to their clothes before they could feel at home in them ; and that if they were awkward, as they would be in unaccustomed dresses, the grace of the exhibition would be spoilt.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune’s womb,
Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
At nothing trembles.”

PLEASANCE having seen her girl perform on the night of the dress rehearsal, was quite content to remain at home and let Mrs. Heathdale have the pleasure of witnessing the grand representation. She sat by a small fire, and thought over her past life as the slow hours went on. The life of toil on the mine during her childhood had not been irksome; there had been coercion and hard work for seven or eight hours in the day, but then there had been the play with her companions, and the hearty meal made on dry bread or cold potatoes when work was over. Then came the glory of her young life—her acquaintance with Edgar. For the three following years she had lived in bodily comfort,

scarcely at first appreciated, in the strain of mental work hallowed by hope—hope to see her husband—to claim her reward in his approbation of her efforts for mental cultivation, and to show him the beautiful infant who could claim him as her father. She was not twenty when the fabric of these hopes was shattered to its very foundation; but she had possessed herself of a fragment of the ruins, more precious to her than life itself. There was a demarcation in her life:—fifteen years of careless toil; then love and marriage, and a life altered from its very foundations—the labours of brain versus hands.

Placed under happier circumstances, the conduct of Pleasance would have been irreproachable; as it was, her fifteen blameless years had made her see more clearly the irreparable nature of the past. Mrs. Heathdale's love for Pleasance did not blind her to that fact. With a natural feeling, which would prompt a mother whose child had been burnt hopelessly, to double precaution as regarded the one left to her, both ladies were strict in their notions of what was right to inculcate into Margaret's mind.

The grand performance had a complete success. The parents were pleased to see their children look pretty in unaccustomed garments. The performance was not over till a late hour, and, at its conclusion, Mr. Forrester made a petition for what he called a little indiscriminate dancing.

"You see, my lord marquis and revered father," said he, addressing Monsieur Dappert, "though I have not had the inestimable advantage of having been your pupil, I am fond of the amusement, and I have been reduced to inactivity since you took what should have been my place, had I never danced a minuet, or seen it danced. Your fair partner can, no doubt, take a turn with me in a waltz or galop, if you will do me the honour to introduce me, for at present I have not exchanged a word with the young lady which has not been dictated and prompted by your charming libretto."

"Ah! yeas, yeas. Ve vill see. Je demande permission de Madame Heatdale. She ees très—vat you call streeect."

Cassilis Forrester flushed at this observation.

"I do not think that Miss Petrel's chape-

rone or mother can object in any way to me, as I am a gentleman by descent and education."

"Ah, true! but——"

Monsieur Dappert hurried up to Mrs. Heathdale, followed by the pretender to Margaret's hand for the dance, when they had the mortification of seeing Mr. Knight leading off Margaret to a set of quadrilles which madame was forming. He overheard Margaret's request to stand as one of the side couples, as she was unfamiliar with the figures, and placed her according to her wishes. Margaret was well acquainted with her turned-up-nose partner, and liked him for his quickness and good-temper.

"Is it not deuced hard on a fellow to be born ugly, Miss Petrel?"

Margaret was about to answer, truly, that she did not know; but she changed the speech into—"It may be so; but I do not see how you can be a judge."

"Ah! very pretty of you; but you know what a face I have: so curious that no one can keep his countenance when he looks at me. I never cared till these theatricals were

mooted ; then the full discredit of my unfortunate face flashed upon me. I was unfit for the part of a lover. I never could hope to provoke any emotion but risibility in the fair sex : any feeling but contempt."

Here the lady opposite Mr. Jack Knight began to dance forward towards him, as the figure required ; and Jack made so ludicrous an expression of penitence at having forgotten his duty as her vis-à-vis, that she laughed merrily ; and Jack, when he returned to balancez to Margaret, said—

"I told you so."

Margaret was relieved that, as her turn to advance came next, she was not compelled to answer.

In the following figure Jack again addressed her.

"Did he do it as well as I did ?"

Margaret answered as truthfully as she could with due regard to politeness.

"I should think Mr. Cassilis Forrester was very conversant with theatrical entertainments ; but, as was natural, he was not so ready as my first Adolphe in taking up the cues, as you had rehearsed the part ten times,

and he had not rehearsed at all. How did you like his voice? He was still a little hoarse, but his tenor is very sweet."

"Humph!" said Jack, in a discontented tone, "I think I can sing as well as Forrester any day."

"I suppose you consider him very good looking."

"Eh! *grande ronde*," shouted the marquis, seeing the heads of the young partners in whispering proximity."

It was the finale, and Margaret made a diminutive edition of her elaborate minuet curtsy, and walked at once to the spot where Mrs. Heathdale was seated, glad to escape from her jealous admirer. There she found Mr. Forrester, who was talking easily and intelligently to her chaperone. She introduced him to Margaret, and they stood up at once for the next dance, which was a waltz.

This placed Margaret at a disadvantage. She could not be dignified nor resentful when she was uncertain about her power of waltzing. She looked into her partner's face with a troubled, timid expression, which made her more irresistible than she had ever seemed in the majesty of her imperious beauty.

"Stop a minute, if you please. I cannot dance this."

Mr. Forrester misunderstood the hesitation, and said—

"Do you disapprove of waltzing?"

Margaret, recovering her presence of mind, replied—

"In my own person, I do. I judge not others, but if you would like to dance a set of quadrilles with me, I should like it much."

"In the mean time," began Cassilis, "will you accept my company, or do you wish me to take you to your chaperone?"

"Probably you would like to obtain a partner for the waltz, and you can claim me when the quadrille begins."

"I had rather sit and talk, if I could find a cool corner. Here is one."

Margaret, having seated herself, looked at the circling dancers, and smiled.

"What provokes your risibility?" asked Cassilis.

"Oh! I was thinking that I resemble the foolish fowl in the original poems I learnt when I went to school, who, seeing the ducks disporting themselves, 'she thought of all things she should like to do so.'"

"Then, may I ask why you do not? Do you disapprove of me as a partner? Shall I seek out Jack Knight? You like him, I believe."

"I will confess the truth," said Margaret. "I never waltzed in my life, except with madame; and it is quite a different thing to twirl round with a dancing mistress in one's own drawing-room to one's own singing, from taking one's place amongst that set of teetotums."

"I have no doubt you would waltz perfectly well. Will you try a few turns? We can leave off if you dislike it. I am more anxious now, because I fear from the rattling of carriages that the ball is nearly over."

Margaret answered by standing up, and off she slid, and found the movement delightful, though after a dozen rounds she left off and staggered to a seat.

"I feel inclined," she said, "to parody Lord Chesterfield's question as regarded hunting, and say, 'did ever any one waltz twice?'" and she put her hand to her brow as if to arrest the whirling in her head.

"It is nothing when one is used to it. Like

intoxicating liquors, and waltzing with a beautiful partner is intoxicating. But you are weary and silent, so I cannot choose a better time to ask you if you have forgiven my unintentional intrusion on your company some little time since? I have had time in my sick room for penitence, and promises of amendment."

"Yes, I will forgive you if you will tell me all about the young lady I so much resemble. In the first place what may be her age?"

"She was sixteen last March—on the 29th."

"Ah! I am ten months younger. I shall be sixteen next month?"

"On the 29th, also?" said the wily admirer, thinking of an anonymous birthday gift.

"No, on the 15th. Now tell me all about her. It is not unnatural that I should desire to find out all I can about my double. How long have you known the young lady?"

"My first meeting with my Margaret was in a sitting room at Birchland Rectory. She was the youngest of the house, and she had prepared a tiny set of white tea service to welcome me, her cousin, a young gentleman

of the ripe age of thirteen. I did my best not to swallow the little cups, though the effort required my greatest care. On the following day I gave her a ride on my pony, holding her on all the time. Since then we have been fast friends. When I saw you I felt convinced it was she. Just as you are now, shall I see her when I go back to the rectory."

"You have not met her very lately, perhaps."

"No, not for nearly three years."

"How was that? If you are so much attached to your Margaret, I wonder you were not impatient to see her sooner."

"I was impatient; but that only made me uncomfortable, and did not expedite matters."

"Why were you separated? Now, tell me all about it," said Margaret, leaning back, and covering all her face below her eyes with her fan.

The fan was of a pale cream colour, and intensified the splendour of her dark eyes and eyebrows.

"My Margaret," said the youth, "I must call her mine, because you are not mine, you

know, to distinguish her," said he, with a little awkward laugh.

"Yes—go on."

"Well, my Margaret had lived all her life in a country rectory. Her mother, or rather her step-mother, who is my aunt, dotes on her, and never would send her to school, consequently she was provided with a governess, who taught her as little as possible, on the principle of economising her own stock of learning, for, as she must mentally, have observed, 'If I teach her all I know, I shall be considered useless when she has learnt it.' The result was that my Margaret took infinitesimal doses of knowledge. My mother, going on a visit to the rectory, declared that Margaret was the biggest dunce she had ever met. My aunt was alarmed, and determined to rush off to the continent with her charge, believing that a plunge into France, Italy, and Germany, would give her all the knowledge of modern languages which results from a daily and sound study of them from childhood—from infancy would be better—as the flexible tongue can then form sounds rebellious to articulations of maturer youth, and

utterly indomitable to those of age. My dear aunt's plan was to run up a lath-and-plaster imitation of the pyramids, each stone of which was laid with such deliberate care, in bygone ages."

"Well," asked Margaret, inquiringly, "what has been the result?"

"Oh! that," replied Mr. Forrester, "I have yet to discover, and I thought I was on the way to do so some days since, when I was such a goose as to mistake one Margaret for another."

"Shall you see her again soon?" Margaret felt unconsciously touchy about her rival in appearance. "A step-mother, did you say? Poor girl! that cannot be like a real mother. I could not have any advantage that would compensate for the loss of that grandest of all blessings, not even to be plunged into France, Italy, and Germany, for which I have been longing all my life."

"Why do you so much wish to travel?"

"If Icarus had felt Dædalus busy about his shoulder-blades for fifteen years, and had his wings bound and rebound on his reluctant arms, can you understand that he might long

to put aside all other trammels, and mount into the air to try the newly finished wings?"

"In other words, you have learnt modern languages, and want to have an opportunity of trying your skill."

"Yes, probably I should make a shameful failure, but you know

'Tis better to have tried and failed,
Than never to have tried at all,'

to parody the well-known lines."

"I wonder if a man who is plucked at Cambridge thinks so?" murmured Cassilis. "I don't think I could; but there, the parody will not hold water. Studying and loving are two distinct things."

"Are they?" asked Margaret, doubtfully, wondering in her heart if the speaker had done both.

"Of course," he answered a little pettishly; then, as if going on with his own thoughts, he added, "I believe a man's successes at college are never known or thought of out of the area of the university."

There was a pause, and he remembered

what pæans of rejoicing had come from the rectory, and from his mother and step-father, when his name was found to stand fourth on the list of wranglers, and what a pretty, innocent, childish letter from his Margaret.

"That depends," replied the girl, "on the groove in which we exist. Deeds of bodily daring, of noble peril encountered for others, enchain the attention of my very small family circle; but where there is a race of intellect, the relatives of those who run in it, no doubt are always glad to applaud success, and to sympathise with failure."

"And which success would you consider the greatest?" asked the boy, with flashing eyes.

"Self-sacrifice, as shown in bodily peril," replied the girl, "'for thoughts are the attributes of men, but acts the distinction of gods,' as some Greek author says."

Mr. Forrester looked mortified.

"Perhaps I am warped," said the girl, seeing the transient expression, "but my father died in saving the lives of many. My mother worships his memory, and naturally I do also, though I never saw him. The lady

with whom we reside lost her son in the same noble enterprise, and our eyes naturally seek out in the daily papers all records of similar devotedness, and deify the actors of them in our thoughts. No doubt successful victors in intellect have similar triumphs amongst those dear to them, but no one can grudge worship given to those who can no longer be conscious of it, on whose sphinx faces has settled the mysterious smile of indifference."

The words were very solemn, as were the thought which inspired them. Cassilis had forgotten that this Margaret had not known his successes at Cambridge, and had therefore underrated mental exertions as compared to bodily prowess.

They sat under some exotics, hired by M. Dappert to make what he called a *bocage*, and looked down a flowery vista at the company moving off towards the hall, to get to their carriages.

"It is well we had that short waltz, which you thought so disagreeable that you did not wish to repeat it, for it was my only chance."

Mr. Knight now seemed coming to make

his bow, but turned away when he saw Mr. Forrester occupied with Margaret.

"This," said he to himself, "is the luck of being handsome, I have acted with her during ten rehearsals, and he has only taken the character of Adolphe once, and he has cut me out already." And Jack went home so discouraged, that he did not eat more than a dozen oysters for supper, and did not drink more than a pint of stout. So it is evident that his feelings must have been much lacerated.

Monsieur Dappert gallantly put on Mrs. Heathdale's cloak, and handed her into the fly, and Cassilis did the same to Margaret; the horses were restless and Margaret's high head-dress caught the top of the doorway, the structure was disturbed, and one of the lace lappets fell, and was caught, as it wavered down to the ground, by the young man. He concealed and put it in his pocket. It would give him a chance of seeing Miss Petrel again, though it would be the more simple thing to restore the lace trophy to Madame.

Both she and Monsieur now returned to the house glad to forget the trouble and the

pleasure of their party in sleep, and Margaret went back tired and very happy, but with the pure surface of her thoughts troubled by the first reflection of love's image. The conclusion of the second night's performance found them all so sleepy, the all being Pleasance, Mrs. Heathdale, Margaret and the maid, that the important dress, once so cared for, was flung unfolded with its crushed rosebuds on the spare bed, whilst the sleepy eyes of Pleasance, did not detect that one lappet was missing. This was lucky for the peace of mind of the three.

CHAPTER XVII.

“A strickened, not a mournful man, I sigh, but not repine--
For my heart is in that land of love, with those I hope to
join.”

THEY were much given to yawn next morning at breakfast. Mrs. Heathdale complained that the weather had become cold, and asked Margaret to get her a shawl, because she was shivering. Pleasance suggested that she feared Mrs. Heathdale had caught a chill on the previous evening. A dreary rain was beating against the window pane. Margaret was sad, wondering whether she should ever see Cassilis again. He was only a visitor, Jack Knight had said—

“Invited down to take the part of Adolphe, because my snub nose precluded me from taking a lover’s part; if they had but engaged Mr. Clarkson, ‘to build the lofty rhyme,’

nose, I mean, I might have rejoiced in a fine aquiline."

To all this Margaret had listened with incredulity, thinking that Mr. Knight was "drolling,"—but the solid and sad conviction remained that Cassilis was a bird of passage, who had plumed his beautiful wings in the eyes of all beholders, and would now spread them, and disappear for ever.

"Besides," the girl thought, as she left the breakfast-table, Mrs. Heathdale having pushed away her cup and saucer, "he as good as told me that he loved his cousin." With this she strolled to the window, and leant her head against it, looking out on the dreary road, the houses obscured by the misty rain, and the sea grey and ominous of storms in the distance.

Mrs. Heathdale drew near the fire which she had lighted, and occupied herself by trying to kindle the unwilling fuel. Pleasance was gone first to order some broth to be prepared for her friend, and then to pack up the borrowed finery, and the home-made petticoat of rose-bud trimming.

Margaret remained leaning her head against

the frame-work of the window panes. She began to sing in that plaintive minor which would seem to have been wafted down to us on the autumn winds of three hundred years.

“A great while ago, the world begun,
With a heigh-ho ! the wind and the rain !
But now 'tis all one, for our play is done,
And the rain it raineth every day.”

Mrs. Heathdale, shivering over the fire, understood the feeling of the girl, and would have said—nautically, had she put her fears into words—that she saw breakers not ahead, but looming from a distant horizon. Her own feeling of indisposition made her, she supposed, look on matters with a gloomy aspect. She almost wished that Mr. Forrester might go away at once, when no doubt Margaret would forget him: she had seen him but twice. Then Mrs. Heathdale reviewed, in a dreamy way, her own courtship and loving married life, of which hope made great part, and fruition only so much as to give strength to hope when hope succeeded. The Lieutenant kept one loving eye on his home, and another, more eager, on his ship. He was

steady, intelligent, and, strange to say, fortunate. Strange—for fortune generally seems to leave to the steady and intelligent the quiet possession of prudence and wisdom, and reserves her favours for the good-for-nothing.

He had paid for his son's education up to twelve years, and was about to obtain the rank of commander, when he was killed in action.

Her life, though she had been deprived of the two beings dearest to her, had been, she considered, a happy one, compared to that of Pleasance. No investigation into the past with regard to herself, her husband, or her son, could ever flush that withered cheek with shame. She believed that her husband and her son were re-united in heaven, and enjoyed the conviction that she should rejoin them. For this she was willing to await "God's good pleasure," she was accustomed to say to Pleasance; but she did not shrink from the idea of death with any of the shivering horror with which even the good, if possessed of lively imaginations, are accustomed to regard that inevitable fate. She loved Pleasance, and

thought with distress of her fate and that of Margaret, when she should be no longer with them. Mrs. Heathdale dreaded the moment when the circumstance of Margaret being sought in marriage should lead to the revelation of Pleasance's past life. She pitied Margaret, who had no suspicion that her mother had not been equally well connected, and of as gentle blood as her father. Children take everything for granted if they are not told.

Mrs. Heathdale saw all the objections which might be raised against Margaret. She knew how beautiful, how intelligent, how unusually cultivated and well brought up she had been by herself and poor Pleasance—that burnt child, who dreaded the fire for one dearer than herself; and the elder lady asked herself if, when her dear boy lived, she should have objected to his proposing to marry a girl with a parentage so stained, and she admitted that the question would have had great weight with her.

Worst of all would be the poor mother's shame and humiliation when the daughter, taught to regard virtue as the richest dowry, should know that the mother, who was to her

filial love and admiration a creature as near perfection as human nature could attain, should ever have lapsed from a virtue so common as honesty, and have been sentenced to prison as a felon for theft. There was no way out of the difficulty, that Mrs. Heathdale could see. It encircled and clasped them round, all three in its grey web of disgrace ; for Mrs. Heathdale felt that she had partaken the shame by her sixteen years' residence with poor Pleasance. It did not matter for her, for her life would not be long now ; but poor Margaret's career was but beginning, and Pleasance was but thirty-three years old.

The idea of concealing the truth had never struck this single-minded woman. If Margaret had a lover who proposed marriage, he would have to be informed of this terrible truth. If he were generous, Margaret might go through married life with a man who loved her tenderly, without her ever being cognizant of her mother's disgrace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Trifles form the sum of human things."

THESE disagreeable reflections were interrupted by Pleasance coming down with a scared look, and announcing that there was a lappet missing. The information filled all three women with dismay.

When we are looking out for a storm rising in the distant horizon, fortune plays us some trivial spite, and drives the unknown future out of our heads. The lost lappet was less dreary as a subject of thought, than a future recalcitrant lover of Margaret's.

"When did you have it last?" cried Pleasance to Margeret.

"Oh! mamma! I cannot tell really. You see I am not like a spider; I have no eyes at the back of my head."

Pleasance looked inquiringly at Mrs. Heathdale. She had not noticed anything wrong, she said, when Margaret was dancing.

Margaret had a secret dread that the lappet was adorning the branch of a rose near which she leaned her head whilst talking to Mr. Forrester, in Monsieur Dappert's *bocage*.

Mrs. Heathdale suggested that it might have been left in the fly in which they returned. "When the rain ceases we will send Sally to the flyman and inquire. He is not likely to know the value of old lace. If we do not hear anything from him we must speak to madame, and ask if it came off in her house."

"Pleasance, my dear," said Mrs. Heathdale, "I cannot get over my shivers. Will you order me a hot bottle, and I will go to bed at once."

Pleasance turned pale.

"You ill!" she exclaimed, breathless with terror. She relied on her friend in every circumstance. "Oh!" she said, "you *must* not be ill!"

"No," replied Mrs. Heathdale; "I will not more than I can help. I have only caught a

very slight cold ; and if I go to bed, and lie still for an hour or so, or for the whole day, it will go off again, probably."

Pleasance hurried down to fill the water bottle herself, with a feeling that the sooner her friend was in bed, the sooner she would get quite well again.

The friends had never disagreed on any point, because their sympathies were in common. The money belonged to Pleasance, but Pleasance always gave it into Mrs. Heathdale's hands to be expended for the benefit of all three. Sometimes Pleasance acted without the knowledge of her friend and counsellor, and plunged into reckless expense for some article of dress for her friend, which she knew she would never have purchased for herself. Pleasance loved to see her friend magnificently dressed, and to walk by her side to church with the acute consciousness of the sheen and rustle of the moire antique dress with which she had provided her companion. For her own part, she cared not to adorn herself, because she wished not to attract notice. The days had gone by when she had been in a flutter of anxiety between light blue, be-

cause it was most becoming to her beauty, and navy blue, which she desired to purchase in compliment to her husband.

When a woman sits down quietly to ignore admiration, she will not long be troubled by its incense. Worshippers expect recognition. They are like voters at a general election, and expect to be asked for their votes, and to be thanked for them when recorded. The request may be silently urged—a sudden lifting of down-cast lids in passing—a little conscious movement in the gait when any one is in sight—a ribbon or a flower coquettishly placed on the bosom or in the hair;—vanity has a million of such artifices, which “cry aloud and spare not,” Come and admire me.

Pleasance cared for no one, and no one out of the small house consequently cared for her beyond its four walls.

She was carrying the hot-water bottle up to her friend's bedroom, when there was a ring of the bell. A dreadful thought took possession of her mind, that madame had come to demand her wardrobe. She stood for a moment petrified; then hurried on—that under any circumstances her beloved friend's

feet should not remain cold any longer. She must brave the irate lady, and answer for the sin she had committed in her careless fastening of the lappet, when Mrs. Heathdale was safe in bed.

Mrs. Heathdale was drawing the bed-clothes over her, and Pleasance placed the bottle at her feet and drew the curtains. She would not tell the invalid what she feared about the incursion of the owner of the lappet; but having small inclination to face her enemy, she busied herself in folding Mrs. Heathdale's clothes, and putting them into the chest of drawers. She heard footsteps—a man's footsteps—ascending the stairs to the drawing-room.

“Ah!” said Pleasance, “it is Monsieur Dappert come. That is better than madame.”

CHAPTER XIX.

"O Love! young love
Let saints and cynics cavil as they will,
One throb of yours is worth whole years of ill."

PLEASANCE listened, but heard nothing. It struck her that she was acting a cowardly part in allowing Margaret to bear the brunt of the dancing master's wrath, when he heard of the loss of the lappet, and with a sigh she went to the glass, smoothed her bands of golden hair, and turned down the sleeves of her dress, which she had placed out of harm's way when she filled the water-bottle, and was proceeding to the staircase, when Margaret bounded up, with her face beaming with excitement and happiness, holding the lost lappet delicately between the tips of her finger and thumb.

"What ! he has brought it ?"

"Yes."

"Where was it found ?"

"Oh ! it dropped from my head in getting into the carriage, and he picked it up."

Pleasance examined it carefully.

"I am glad it did not get into the mud. It was very kind in him to bring it. I dare say he said nothing to madame about it, lest she should think us careless, and be angry."

"No," replied Margaret, slowly, and somewhat puzzled, and not thinking in her heart of hearts that Mr. Forrester had gauged the extent of madame's irritability. Then she said, "Mamma, won't you come down and see him ?"

Pleasance was always scared at the notion of seeing company, and now Mrs. Heathdale was not present to bear the responsibility.

Mother and daughter were playing at cross purposes. Neither understood the mistake of the other.

"My dear," deprecatingly, "I really do not see that there is any necessity for my going down. I believe he is very fond of

you, Margaret," an assertion which crimsoned the girl's cheek. "You might say—(I would not for the world be wanting in courtesy)—that Mrs. Heathdale is ill, and that I do not like to leave her, that we are all rather tired with our two nights' gaieties, and I hope he will excuse my coming down. Did he come in a cab or walking?"

"Walking, mamma."

"Then we can't ask him to take the dress."

"Oh, no."

"Say I hope he was pleased at the way in which the entertainment succeeded, and I trust he is not much fatigued by his exertions."

Margaret turned away, discouraged, and went downstairs slowly. There was something so strange in all her mother had said, that she was completely puzzled.

She entered the room, looking a little flushed and foolish. Mr. Forrester was seated on the music-stool, and turning over the leaves of a song. He struck the chords of the key note.

"Do you sing this, Miss Petrel?" he said, pointing to the music.

"Yes," Margaret replied.

"Do you play your own accompaniments?"

"Not when I can get my master to play them for me,"

"Shall *I* be your master for once?" and he preluded with scientific skill.

"Certainly."

She began, *Robert! toi que j'aime*, that music which breathes the very soul of passionate supplication. When the song terminated in the passage, holding the notes in regular decadence, slowly one after another, Mr. Forrester was charmed with their wealth and power, and it was with a little tremor of doubt that he listened to the next outburst, wondering if Margaret's voice could peal out the next high note and hold it, as she had done the lower one. But he needed not to be uneasy. Margaret's voice seemed never to reach its selvage. It was unusually full and powerful, and of compass so remarkable that any songs sang by the generality of musical persons did not tax its resources.

"I suppose you do not shake?" asked Mr. Forrester.

Margaret smiled.

"I do, but not well. My master says my voice is elephantine in its movements, and incapable of the quick transitions necessary for a good shake. He says, 'Never show the world what you cannot do.'"

Margaret had forgotten her awkwardness in having to entertain Mr. Forrester alone. He took up an old music-book, and turned over the songs with which Mrs. Heathdale had captivated the heart of the lieutenant fifty years before. He put the book open on the music-stand at that charming duet of Braham's—

"Oh! take this nosegay, gentle youth!"

The duet was excellently sung, and gave great delight to both performers.

"How pleasant it is to sing with you!" Margaret said, innocently. "I never sang with any one before, excepting my music-master, and he is oh, so wheezy!"

Cassilis smiled with a little look of triumph. Such young things could well afford to laugh at the wheeziness of stout fifty years.

"And he is your 'gentle youth?'"

"Yes, the best, I may say the only one, I

have to sing with. I have quite a set of wheezy youths altogether."

"May I ask how many?"

"I will tell you. There is dear little Monsieur Dappert, he is not at all wheezy, but you will admit he is not very youthful. Then there is the German master; I expect him this afternoon."

"Ah! I see you have your books all in readiness. You read Schiller, I perceive. You are an Italian scholar also?"

"Yes, I told you I longed to travel abroad, like *your* Margaret, to learn all the little intricacies of sound which may be caught by quick and attentive ears, when you are surrounded by those who all speak the language you want to acquire. Otherwise one is so like to appropriate only the peculiarity of the master's tone, and not the tone of his nation."

There was a little pause, and Margaret then said,

"Are you not anxious to see how your cousin has progressed in her studies?"

Mr. Forrester looked at the speaker with a meaning smile.

"Really I am not half so impatient as I was, having found that there are more Margarets than one in the world."

As the girl did not know how to take the implied compliment, or whether to consider it jest or earnest, she turned the conversation, and asked him if he would not sing a solo. She avowed that she could never enjoy singing so much if she knew she had to watch for the bar where her voice was to take its turn with that of her companion performer.

"I will sing with pleasure. What shall it be? I will try a song I composed after acting the part of a lover with a young lady."

"Do you always take the lover's parts?"

"Yes. I have tried to get managers to give me bloody-minded tyrants, or stern fathers—anything for a change—but they always disregarded my petitions. I have to thank youth and a slim figure, I believe, and those charms are very fleeting. A man with a clumsy waist, and a bald patch on the top of his head, would look ridiculous as a lover, you know."

Margaret pondered.

"I suppose Mark Anthony was fat and

fifty ; and yet he was such a lover ! To be sure he could not have been bald, for Cleopatra talks of ‘ the curled Anthony.’ ”

“ How do you know he was fat ? ” asked Mr. Forrester.

“ Because Cæsar tells him he does not like thin people ; and he seems to have had much affection for Anthony.”

“ Would you have liked Anthony as a lover ? You called him, ‘ such a lover.’ ”

“ No. The act of which he was guilty proved that love was all in all with him ; but though the influence must have been overwhelming to make a brave man—such as he had proved himself to be—do an act of cowardice, no true man would have liked him better for it.”

“ If there be any truth in the proverb of women and walnut trees, Anthony went the wrong way to work to retain the love of her Ethiopian majesty.”

“ Pray let me hear your composition. I did not know that you were a poet.”

“ Nor am I ; but a versifier. Here goes,” and he sat down to the piano, and sang—

BELOW THE SALT.

“When in the sombrous woodland scene
I bore the mimic lover's part,
I little thought my love had been
More ready than the prompter's art.

“Thy whispered words of sweet assent
Through my thrilled breast, with rapture stealing.
I quite forgot they were not meant,
And said by rote, and not by feeling.

“Now in the airy realms of sleep
The pleasing fiction lives once more.
Again my anxious trysts I keep,
Again thy tardy steps deplore.

“My beauty's queen, fair Gabrielle,
How blest would be my future life,
If thou indeed with me might dwell,
My light of home! my cherished wife!”

Mr. Forrester repeated these lines with such fervour and earnestness, looking all the while into the face of the young lady, that she drooped her lids, and flushed with confusion. Then she rallied, and being very truthful herself, was ashamed that she should for an instant have doubted his statement, and have appropriated the compliment, which the youth said he had addressed to another lady.

“Was her name really Gabrielle?” she asked.

“No. Not Gabrielle, really. That was only a pet name; her real name is Margaret.”

"Oh-h!" replied the girl in a low voice, turning rather pale; "your cousin Margaret Petrel?"

"Margaret Petrel," the youth replied.

"But," said the girl, looking puzzled, "she could not have acted three years since; she would have been too young—too short—too——"

Just as Margaret was looking up, inquiring for a solution of her difficulties, in the face of her companion, the door was thrown back, and the scared face of Pleasance appeared at the opening.

"Oh, mamma!" said Margaret, smiling. "I am so glad you are come. I want to introduce you to Monsieur Adolphe, to whom I was betrothed in the presence of a large crowd, last night, as Lady Gabrielle de Courcy."

Margaret was very proud of her mother—proud of her delicate beauty—of her refined manners—proud even of her speech and writing, which were correct even to pedantry. The result of education begun rather too late in life for ease in its exercise. Poor Pleasance supposed she must say something.

"I think," she said, blushing, "that I had the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Forrester whilst the minuet was danced on the night of the dress rehearsal. We are much indebted to you, sir, for your kindness in contributing to our gratification, as, considering that you are not one of M. Dappert's pupils, you cannot have felt the same interest in the success of the performance as we did."

"I assure you," said Mr. Forrester, "I took the most lively interest in the play; and, though I am in the habit of amateur acting, I believe my performance was more true to nature last night than it had ever before been."

"I thought your acting seemed very real," said Pleasance, simply; "but I am not a good judge, for I never saw acting of any kind before."

"Religious scruples?" asked Mr. Forrester. "Do you disapprove of public theatres?"

"I never entertained the question," replied Pleasance. "Since my husband's death I have not gone to any place of amusement, and before I married I was not in the way of seeing any."

"I could not have believed it possible that you were the mother of this young lady, or indeed of any grown-up person. I fear I may have made a donkey of myself that evening."

"By no means," responded Pleasance, smiling. "I made your peace with Miss Petrel by recounting to her the confession of your mistake."

"I would fain hope, madam, that as my cousin's name is Petrel there may be some connection between our families. Are you related to the Rector of Birchland?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Margaret's mother; "but I never knew my husband's connections. He might have had relatives, of whose existence I was unaware. We were separated by his going to sea, a week after our marriage."

"Ah!" cried Mr. Forrester, "I have observed on such occasions the woman always clings to her own relations. But," he said, hastily, "I have occupied your time and Miss Petrel's most unconsciously. I shall find Jack in a fever when I return, for I did not say where I was going, and he had asked me

to take a long walk with him this afternoon just to keep me out of harm's way, as he assured me."

He took his hat, and, bowing, left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

“Though prudence may press me,
And duty distress me
Against my fond heart,
Alas ! what can I do ?”

“WHAT an agreeable gentleman !” cried Pleasance.

“What a strange one,” murmured Margaret.

“I cannot make out what he means.”

“My dear !” said the mother, “your god-mamma will be angry with me. I made such a mistake : I told her that Monsieur Dappert was with you in the drawing room. By-and-by, as I sat by her side, she said, ‘who is that singing with Margaret ?’ I listened and hesitated : old Monsieur Dappert. ‘Nonsense my dear Pleasance,’ she replied. ‘That mel-low voice can never be Monsieur Dappert’s “scrannel pipe.”’ Then I went down and

asked Sally, and she said it was a strange gentleman, young and handsome, on which I 'bustled up with unsuccessful speed,' as Cowper says."

"Indeed, mamma, your speed was very successful, and I was quite glad that you came in and showed yourself. I am so proud of my mamma, and I have such good reason for my pride," Margaret continued, caressing her mother's beautiful cheek, from which the bloom, a thought less vivid than in early youth, showed as yet no sign of fading. Pleasance kissed her daughter, and went out of the room.

She wanted to confess her mistake to her friend, but found her asleep. When she met Margaret again, she did not refer to the subject, neither did the girl. Margaret did not know enough of society to be sure whether Mr. Forrester's evident admiration of her was merely the badinage of compliment, or if it were the expression of real attachment. She thought it must be the former, because it was unreasonable to suppose that a young man should fall in love with a girl, and confide the fact to her after

meeting her thrice only. She must think no more of Mr. Forrester, and renewed this resolution so frequently that she was obliged to think of him during all her waking hours.

When Cassilis Forrester returned to Mrs. Knight's, he had to meet and turn aside, as best he might, the hailstone of questions and badinage with which he was greeted. No doubt, Mrs. Knight suggested, he had called on the fair Gabrielle, to inquire of her health after the fatigues of the performance. Yes, Cassilis admitted he had done so, and regretted to say that though the young lady was as blooming as only fifteen and sixteen can contrive to be, after two sleepless nights, Mrs. Heathdale, her chaperone, was ill in bed—had caught a bad cold.

"Indeed! I am sorry to hear that," said Mrs. Knight; "whom did you see, then?"

"Oh, Mrs. Petrel, who is, I believe, the fair Gabrielle's mother, but looks young enough to be her sister. What a beautiful woman she is!"

"Yes, she is very lovely," observed his hostess; "rather fragile in appearance. Do you not think so? I am astonished at your

having been received by her, she so seldom appears in society."

"Why is that?"

"I believe she secluded herself entirely on hearing of the loss of her husband. They were quite boy and girl when they married. I have often suspected it must have been a stolen match. Parents seldom allow their children to commit so grave an act as matrimony before they arrive at years of discretion."

"Mother," asked Jack, "have I arrived at years of discretion? If so, I will go and propose to-morrow to Miss Petrel. What is the test of having reached that desirable point in one's life?"

"It is marked by this: the power of supporting a wife and family by your own exertions," responded his mother, drily.

"Ahem!" replied Jack. "As I had not the fortune to be born with a golden spoon in my mouth, I fear I must wait."

"Or look out for a rich bride," suggested his mother, "which may suit you as well."

"Crabbe," said the youth, "speaks of the

pleasure of the lady under such circumstances—

‘ But happier far the rich endowing bride.’

The pleasure must be all on her side, I imagine. I should not like to depend on my wife for support,” replied Jack.

“ I should think Miss Petrel was penniless,” observed Mr. Forrester.

“ Why so ?” inquired Mrs. Knight, curiously.

“ Simply because fortune is a niggard, and seldom bestows rare beauty and talent with wealth. The rich girls are awkward and plain and stupid as a rule.”

“ I am glad I have no daughters,” said Mrs. Knight, smiling. “ Wealth, however, is rare, and your opinions will not make you enemies ; so many girls are portionless, that they may flatter themselves they possess wit and beauty to balance the inequalities of fortune.”

“ To return to Mrs. Petrel,” said Mr. Forrester ; “ have you known her long ?”

“ I can scarcely say I know her at all, personally. I have known her some time, but I have never exchanged half-a-dozen words with

her. She has lived in that small house on the cliff for sixteen years in perfect seclusion, and when her husband was drowned with the son of her friend, she put on the mourning dress of a widow, which she has worn till now, a signal that she does not intend to take a second. I suppose she will be more accessible now she has a daughter to introduce. These young folks drag their parents into scenes of half-forgotten gaiety," Mrs. Knight continued, looking at her two sons.

"Think yourself fortunate, my dear mother," said Jack, "that it is optional in your case. My snub nose does not require a chaperone, as a snub-nosed daughter would. Parents like to be compelled to be gay sometimes. No doubt Mrs. Petrel will throw aside her weeds, and appear escorting her daughter like a reasonable creature."

"I suppose," observed Cassilis, "it would never do

'To bear about the mockery of woe,
'To midnight dances and the public show.'

"It is probably no mockery in her, poor woman," rejoined Mrs. Knight; "but Mrs.

Heathdale will be the chaperone of Miss Petrel as soon as she recovers from her cold."

"And in the meantime?" asked Mr. Forrester.

"In the meantime she must stay at home," answered the lady, decidedly; and she wondered how long her son's friend meant to prolong his visit, and reflected it would never do to have that young man falling hopelessly in love in a wrong direction, when, as she had understood, he was meant to marry his cousin, who would possess a large property.

. When a well-regulated young man falls in love with a young girl in his own rank of life, he is generally as incapable of measuring difficulties as a kitten who, being placed on one table and seeing a saucer of milk on a neighbouring one, attempts to walk over the intervening space, unconscious of the pitfall between her and the object of her desire. There is something touching in the spectacle of headlong love, such as is seen in youth. How utterly disregardless, as a rule, it is of household, income taxes, rates, and marriage settlements. Let the cake be ordered at once, and the orange wreath and the bridal

veil. In new countries, where the population is sparse, early marriages are not considered undesirable, and the restraints of our civilization, which renders such unions inconvenient, are irksome to the young lover.

Mr. Forrester had had his own way pretty much since his birth, and now he did not anticipate any opposition from his parents. He was between twenty-three and twenty-four years of age, and thought he had a right to consult his own judgment in seeking a wife. Moreover, he had the usual delusion of youth; that sober, staid folks of middle age, like his father and mother, would fall down and worship the golden image his love had set up, and would be votaries as devout as himself at the shrine of his deity.

So he asked Jack Knight to take a walk with him on the following morning; and Jack consenting, like a good fellow as he was, without any reproaches as to his want of faith on the previous occasion, he straightway required to be conducted to the horticultural gardens; and, having expended a guinea in a fine bunch of exotics, and bringing them away in triumph, called on their way back at the

small house on the cliff, and, ringing the bell, desired Sally, who opened the door, to present them to Miss Petrel. He lingered for an instant, in the hope of hearing her voice or her footstep; and then, remembering future contingencies, and that if Mrs. Heathdale did not get well soon she could not chaperone Margaret, he inquired after that lady's health with the greatest interest.

"Mrs. Heathdale is better, I think?" he said to Sally.

"Here is Miss Petrel," said the servant; and braids of glossy black hair were seen emerging from the kitchen stairs.

The light draught of air from the kitchen door made Margaret lift her head, and, seeing the two gentlemen, she put the covered cup of broth from her hand on to the slab, and came forward to shake hands with the young men.

Margaret's face was sad, for she said Mrs. Heathdale was "no better." Then the countenance of Cassilis saddened also, but it was only a passing shadow thrown over a bubbling spring, scarcely obscuring the sparkle of the bounding water.

"I have brought you a few flowers," said the youth, producing his bouquet.

"Oh, how beautiful!" cried the girl, forgetting all else in the contemplation of forms, colours, and scents, which were new to her. "I never saw such flowers! I did not know that they existed."

"Yes; Puck would seem to have collected them when he 'put a girdle round the earth,'" said the youth. "I hope 'the little western flower, purple with love's wound,' may be amongst them. Suppose you squeeze some of the juice on your eyelids to-night."

Margaret looked down.

"But really," he continued, "I think that all beauties of the vegetable world are collected in these days, and brought to live in an artificial atmosphere."

"Yes," said the girl. "In a grand old botanical book, the locality from whence each specimen is taken is shown in the landscape. I have always wished it were the case with every pictured flower. I have not an idea whence this plant is derived," she said, pointing to one bearing a shower of pink bells,

with stems so slender as to be scarcely discoverable.

"I think we might sing a chorus, *Ignoramus*," observed Jack; "for, probably, could any one pronounce it, we should feel obliged to take off our hats out of respect for the grandiloquence of the name. I have always observed that they christen the smallest flowers with the longest designations. But, Forrester, if we stay any longer the folks will take us for a couple of gardeners, wishing the young lady to purchase your bouquet."

Cassilis blushed, and, raising his hat, bowed and followed his friend, who had just performed the same ceremony.

"I wonder if I should have asked them in," speculated Margaret. "How good and bountiful nature is to form these beauties for the delight of our senses. I wonder if godmamma will like them;" and she carried them up to Mrs. Heathdale, who could not endure the strong perfume, nor the bright colours of the bouquet.

Pleasance, however, gave it all the admiration which Margaret could desire. She was possessed by the instinct which actuates all

mothers seemingly—to get her daughter well married. The admiration which Mr. Forrester had expressed of Margaret seemed to receive a beautiful expression in this lovely gift.

“Godmamma seems no better,” Margaret had said, and proposed sending for Mr. Peterson.

Mrs. Heathdale objected.

“I do not wish it,” she said, quietly but decidedly.

She had never had any illness in the sixteen years of life spent with Pleasance, and this interruption of her normal state filled Pleasance and Margaret with undefined apprehensions.

CHAPTER XXI.

"'Tis roses fled as soon as shed,
'Tis morning's winged dream,
'Tis a light that ne'er can shine again
On life's dull stream."

MR. FORRESTER was not invited to remain longer with his friend, Jack Knight. Mrs. Knight believed that by severing her son's friend from the young lady to whom his devotion was paid so unreservedly, she was extinguishing the attachment. Instead of this, she was only expediting its serious expression. The lady took him to task one day.

"My dear Mr. Forrester," she said, "you seem to me to be on the eve of committing a great imprudence."

"In what way?" replied the youth, with a flushed face.

"You are entangling yourself with a young lady."

"I object to the word entanglement: a tangle means something accidental and undesigned. I love Miss Petrel, and I mean to tell her so on the first opportunity. Pardon me," Cassilis continued, with heat, "if I say that your advice would be more disinterested did not Jack admire the lady as much as I do."

"At least," said Mrs. Knight, "take the advice of a friend. See your father and mother, as a dutiful son should, before you speak to Miss Petrel, and obtain their consent to your addressing her. Be assured, my dear, that you will not prosper less well in life for obeying the fifth commandment."

This was very reasonable; but it required time, and Cassilis wanted his suit to proceed at railroad speed. He felt that Mrs. Knight had right on her side, but he hated the right which required self-sacrifice. He had watched the house for several days, and had met Margaret, and had walked by her side in her quick, anxious errands to obtain some small delicacy which might tempt Mrs. Heathdale's appetite.

On the following day, turtle soup and a shape of ice had reached the small house on the cliff anonymously. Margaret had taxed him with having sent it, and he defended himself so lamely that she saw he was the donor.

One day he called to inquire after the invalid, and Pleasance, hearing his voice, came to the door, and asked him to come in and have some tea. She was just going to have hers with Margaret. Cassilis flushed with pleasure, and went in without saying a word.

Mrs. Petrel went downstairs to fill another cup and saucer and plate, not to disturb Sally who was with Mrs. Heathdale; at that moment Margaret came down from the sick-room sadly, and with eyes depressed. She did not see that any one was present, and when a slight noise attracted her attention to the part of the room where Cassilis stood, quick blood rushed over her cheek and brow, and her face lit up with an eloquent smile which gladdened the heart of her lover.

“I did not know you were here,” she said,

holding out her hand, which he seized and did not relinquish.

"Yes ; I am here, and your mamma has promised me some tea," said the youth triumphantly ; tea meant, he thought, staying till a late hour in the evening, and the supposition made him triumphant.

When the tea was made Mrs. Petrel poured out a cupful for her friend and carried it up-stairs ; Margaret pressed forward to take it from her hand, but the mother desired her to attend to the guest, and looking back, suggested whether Mr. Forrester would not prefer toast to bread and butter.

"May I not have cake ?" the youth asked.

"Certainly, but it is two days old ; if you would like some toast I will go down and make you some at the kitchen fire."

"Of course I should prefer toast freshly made to cake which was new two days ago."

"Then I will make you some," replied the girl. "Don't look at me, or I shall cut my fingers," she continued, as she sliced a round from the divided loaf. This she put on a plate, and disappeared.

Cassilis waited till she was out of sight, to avoid being forbidden, and then followed Margaret. The kitchen stairs were neither many nor steep, and Cassilis stopped a moment at the door when he reached, to contemplate the scene within. Margaret was kneeling on one knee and toasting the bread, which was extended at the end of a long toasting fork ; nothing could be cleaner or brighter than the surrounding objects ; a piece of carpet was placed as a rug for the comfort of Sally's feet, the rest of the stone-work being sanded. Bright saucepans looked as if they never could have been smutted by contact with the fire. The tea-kettle simmered on the hob, the table was of spotless white wood, as was the dresser. Cassilis wondered where the servant could be, and why there were no preparations for dinner, unconscious that the meal so-called had been eaten at one o'clock, which enabled Martha to clear away any signs of "eating cares," and go upstairs to put on her afternoon dress at three o'clock in the day.

Margaret, hearing a slight noise, looked back, and exclaimed, " You should not be so

impatient. It is a nice clear fire for toasting, but I have only just turned the bread ; now you see I am no longer the Lady Gabrielle, but the maid Nannette, and you are Monsieur Adolphe."

"I wish Adolphe had been otherwise named."

"Why?"

"I object to be called Adolphe, from association of ideas."

"Indeed!" said the girl, "my association was with a little story book of the last century called 'The Looking Glass,' with charming illustrations by Stothard, in which there was a blurred woodcut of a swamp and a figure struggling through it; the letter-press being, 'at every step the miserable Adolphus sank deeper and deeper,' an announcement which filled my childish mind with unutterable horror; was that your association of ideas?"

"No," said the youth; "mine was with a French novel called 'Adolphe,' written by Benjamin Constant. Perhaps the author had read 'the Looking Glass,' for his hero falls

mentally and morally into a similar quagmire."

"Ah?" observed Margaret, "all French novels later than Madame de Genlis are *tabooed* to me by my two mothers, but your toast is quite done, now, hot buttered, or cold?"

"Hot," replied the youth promptly, and Margaret got some butter from the dairy, and buttered it. "I see some eggs in this basket may I have two boiled."

"Certainly."

"Here is the saucepan."

"Oh! you must wait till the water boils," replied Margaret, "before you put them in."

"How very different this is from my preconceived ideas of a kitchen; at this hour if I went to that of my father to beg for a bone for a favourite dog, I should find a fat cook larding the joint and the lean earth, at the same time, with her attendant nymph, the kitchen maid, both irritated, both greasy, and the surroundings telling of 'eating cares,' and general discomfort."

"Ah!" cried Margaret, but the result is very satisfactory I have no doubt, to those

who are to profit by it at seven or eight o'clock. We are poor folks, and have small joints, and not too many of those. Three woman do not require very heavy sacrifices of comfort from their cook, and now, your eggs are boiled, and we must seek the upper air, for I hear Sally's step on the stairs, and she will be angry if we invade her sanctuary."

They went upstairs, and Cassilis ate his toast and eggs, and drank his tea, and thought the meal the most delicious he had ever tasted. Mrs. Petrel seemingly had finished her tea whilst they were in the kitchen, and had returned to the sick room. Margaret and Cassilis sat together till twilight sank down on the quiet room. Margaret involuntarily drew towards the window, and looked out on the dim sea, followed by Cassilis, who seated himself near her and followed with his eyes the direction of hers towards the colourless horizon.

By degrees their eager talk sank into a few words, uttered at intervals, more in accordance with the quietness of all surrounding

objects. Cassilis was sad, Margaret tranquilly happy.

"Gabrielle," he said at length, "I am going away to-morrow morning."

He had taken her hand in his a moment before, and felt the involuntary start quiver through her frame at the intelligence. She withdrew her hand, and said, with a reticence which was the result of maiden instinct,

"Are you going home, or to Birchland Rectory?"

"I am going home," he said, and paused. "My mother has desired me to return and meet a party of friends and—relatives staying at my step-father's."

"Then your cousin is amongst the relatives?"

"Yes; I had a letter from Margaret this morning, saying how long it was since we had met, and urging me to come to some merry-making which was to be given at my step-father's seat."

"I hope you will be well amused," said Margaret, in a constrained voice, "and enjoy yourself thoroughly;" and having accomplished

that feat, she sat very upright in her chair. and pursed up her red lips very tightly.

"Gabrielle, will you be glad to see me when I come back?"

"Certainly, if you ever do come back."

"All my hope of future happiness depends on my return, and on the welcome I shall then receive from you," said the boy.

Margaret was silent. What could she say? Had she revealed what was in her mind, she would have revealed her conviction that the rival Margaret, backed by the support of her relatives, would soon efface her image from the breast of her lover.

She was silent, expecting him to say more now, as he had said so much, but a step was heard on the stairs, and Sally appeared at the door.

"Do you know the time, Miss Margaret?" she said, in a voice of indignation. "You must have done slopping about your tea by this time. Nine o'clock, sir," she continued, looking sternly at Cassilis. "Time for good folks to be taking' themselves home and preparing for bed."

Cassilis arose, much perturbed, and extended his hand to Margaret.

“Good-night.”

“Good-night and good-bye,” replied the girl, with an appearance of cheerfulness.

CHAPTER XXII.

“And is he gone? On sudden solitude
How oft that fearful question will intrude.”

HE was gone. He looked back to see if Margaret was at the landing of the stairs, for he heard a step, but he saw only Sally, encumbered by the tea-tray, which she was bringing down. The lamps were lit in the street. He looked stealthily towards the window at which he had left Margaret, and saw that the curtain had been drawn across it. Except the slight start when he announced his coming departure, Margaret had given him no encouragement to believe that she preferred him, and his passion burnt all the more hotly for the doubt.

The girl herself wept bitter tears of mortification, when she found herself alone. She wiped her eyes hastily, and took up a book,

when she heard her mother's step on the stairs. Her eyes fell on the lines—

“And there were bitter partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and struggling sighs,
Which ne'er might be repeated ; who can guess
If e'er again should meet those mutual eyes.”

She looked up and inquired after her god-mamma.

“She is sleeping,” said Pleasance, with a glance of inquiry into Margaret's face.

She would not force herself into her daughter's confidence, but hoped she might tell her voluntarily ; but there were no smiles nor dimples in the face of Margaret, such as would herald a confession of the exceeding happiness resulting from a consciousness of mutual affection.

She strove to speak quietly to her mother, but the quick ear of affection detected the slight tremor in the voice, which any sudden emotion or increased effort of concealment would turn into a sob.

Evidently Margaret had nothing pleasant to tell, any more than Pleasance, whose watching by her friend's side had not increased her cheerfulness.

Pleasance knew but little of the habits and customs of society. She had heard that Mr. Forrester was steady in conduct, well connected, and rich. Indeed, all his appointments showed wealth, even as Pleasance thought, to wastefulness. Why should a man's cambric handkerchiefs be of such marvellous fineness? This handsome youth, who had lived seemingly in the cultured pleasure grounds of life, had more delicate clothes and of richer texture than those of the two noble-hearted men, who had given their lives for the lives of others. Surely what was good enough for her Edgar and for Lieutenant Heathdale, might serve that fair-weather youth, whose curly hair never seemed to have been tossed by any breeze strong enough to ruffle the smooth felt of his well-brushed hat. She began to dislike him from jealousy of the dead, and as an actual rival in the affections of her child.

"She does not tell me anything that passed," she thought; "she has shut up her heart from her mother, lest I should see the form she has enshrined therein."

As they sat together, without the impetus

to sociability given by a fire, Margaret still held her book before her, not to be compelled to talk, and Pleasance, wounded in heart, took her work-basket to pass the hour which must elapse before bed-time—that time which usually meant that Margaret should sleep in her mother's sight, but which now would separate them, as Mrs. Petrel could not leave her friend's sick bed with any degree of peace.

“Margaret would talk to me if she knew I must be away from her to-night,” the mother flattered herself.

Margaret was busy in repeating to herself all that Cassilis had said to her, and trying to decide whether he would have explained himself still further if that stupid Sally had not interfered.

Margaret did not know that it is only the feather which is swept aside by the breath of circumstances. The branch, though retroverted, resumes its former position when the accidental breeze is past. Not the ill-timed interference of a dozen Sallys would keep a voice still which was determined on utterance.

It is impossible to put old heads on young shoulders. If such incongruities are arranged by a freak of nature, we hate the misplaced head. Cassilis, had he been a cautious youth, would have acted more wisely in leaving Jack Knight's hospitality to be repaid at some unknown time in the future; instead of which, he said to him when he returned to Jack's home and found his friend a little sulky, in that his guest had preferred to spend the last evening in other society than his,—

“Old fellow, come home with me. They are going to have no end of gaieties to introduce my cousin into the world of fashion. She is considered a beauty. She was a charming child; but I have not seen her for three years; but if she be not fair, there will be troops of other girls. It is a pleasant house. My mother is a little stiff, but my stepfather is delightful—so genial, so indulgent to the faults of others—

‘Above all crime, but pitying all distress.’

You shall have the room next to mine. I can ensure you a welcome.” Jack consented, on a condition that a letter should be posted that

night announcing his advent, that he might not have the awkwardness of arriving unexpectedly.

This was done, and their hour of starting was delayed consequently till noon. Cassilis longed to call again at the small house on the cliff, but he could not shake off his friend. He saw that they must go together, if at all; and he felt he could not intrude Jack on that sick house. He would walk past, he thought, with Jack. He might have a glimpse of Margaret at the window. As he drew nearer, he determined to knock and inquire after the health of Mrs. Heathdale; but in this little plan he was disappointed. Straw was laid down before the door, and the knocker tied up so securely as to prevent the possibility of sound.

He opened the gate of the small yard and went to the kitchen door, but that was impenetrably closed. He wrote on his visiting-card, "Called to inquire," and pushed it under the door, and then went away with a heavy heart. There was no sign of Margaret at the window, and the young men returned

to Jack's home, just in time to eat some luncheon before they caught the train for —.

Presently Sally came home from an errand, and opened the door which she had locked when she went out, putting the key in her pocket. She came in, [placing her heavy basket on the table, and her mud-soiled shoe on the card left by Forrester.

Like the love-letter which was hidden by Tom Piper in his shoe, which was found to be obliterated by friction when sought for, the card which stuck to Sally's foot, being of that thin texture affected by the fashion of the period, travelled about with the old maid-of-all work, upstairs, downstairs, and in my lady's chamber, the pedestrian being perfectly unconscious of what she was the useless bearer.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“When the languid pulse is ceasing,
Start not at its swift decreasing,
’Tis the fettered soul’s releasing,—
Weep not for me.”

MRS. HEATHDALE was worse, and Margaret must hide her anxieties in her own breast, such as were not scared out of her by the dread of an approaching death to one who made a part of her daily life, and was dearly loved by her mother and herself. Death is so terrible to the young that they cannot believe that it can strike those cherished by them till the beloved object is brought by age to the very confines of life.

“How old is my godmamma?” Margaret asked.

“Fifty-eight — nearly fifty-nine,” replied her mother.

"Oh! then she will not die yet," said the inconsequent girl of fifteen or sixteen.

Margaret, on the night that Cassilis left her, offered to sit up in the place of her mother.

"I may as well save mamma," she thought; "*he* has murdered sleep to me."

But Pleasance preferred watching herself by her friend. It was well that she did so, for Mrs. Heathdale felt that her time was short, and had much to say to her friend, in which she did not desire to be interrupted.

She spoke thus, though with many pauses, from difficulty of breathing:—

"I have known it was mortal—the complaint—disease of the heart. I have not much to leave, but I have drawn it all out of the funds to give you, Pleasance, because, my dear, you are such a fool that you will strip yourself for Margaret's sake when she wishes to marry. I will only give you the contents of this desk on your promise never to part with the sum contained in it except for your own expenditure. You may require it. Do not speak. I cannot bear contradiction now.

If I had left it in the funds there would have been trouble to you—legacy duty and probate, and I know not what beside; now you can re-invest it if you choose. The yearly income it will produce will be but small. That it is as large as it is, is due to your lavish generosity, which has saved me so much expense whilst we have lived together. My poor Pleasance! I wish I could live longer. You will miss me so much. We were so happy together, my dear! But Heaven's will be done! I foresee that you will want me so much in the future. Take the box; no, ring for Sally."

There was a pause. Sally was sleeping, but the bell aroused her, and Margaret who slept not. They both hurried half dressed into the room. Mrs. Heathdale smiled faintly.

"Sick folks forget the progress of time. I forgot, in this darkened room, that the world was sleeping. There is no such very great haste; but, as you are all here, I give this box and all it contains to Pleasance Petrel; and I desire you and Sarah Morpheth, and you, Margaret Petrel, to bear witness to the

gift made by me, and that I am perfectly sensible at this time."

Margaret looked scared and concerned, for her godmother's face seemed altered. Sally wept.

"You have not made the promise I required of you."

Pleasance stooped over the bed and kissed the sick woman's brow.

"Your wishes would always be my law," said she, with a sob.

She then made a sign to Sally to leave the room, and, following her, she went downstairs and wrote a note to Mr. Peterson, begging him to come at once to see Mrs. Heathdale.

The sick woman looked round, and seeing only her godchild, said to her—

"My Margaret! never forget that the strongest tie on earth is between the child and the mother. Your mother may need the cares and tenderness she has lavished on you for the last nearly sixteen years."

"Ah, you need not tell me that, god-mamma! How could you think I could ever forget it!"

"'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?'" said Mrs. Heathdale, faintly.

Margaret did not quite catch the words, and entirely missed the doubt implied. A suspicion passed through her mind that her godmother's senses were wandering.

"Be tender to her, Margaret," the sick woman added. "It will be better for you when you come to lie on your deathbed, as I am."

Margaret was awe-stricken, and for the next ten minutes she forgot Cassilis. She was glad when Pleasance, wan, but with that tender, patient quietness which is so dear to the sick, returned to the room.

"You may go to bed again, Margaret," her mother said, in a whisper. "I am going to remain."

"Let me stay, too," Margaret whispered back.

"No," the mother said, quietly but decidedly.

She was still smarting under the reticence of her daughter. Then she added—

"There should not be more than one person

in a sick chamber, to occupy the fresh air, which is required by the patient."

So Margaret went to bed, and fell asleep and dreamed that Cassilis said to her, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

“In life, can love be bought with gold?”

WHEN Cassilis and Jack Knight reached the station, where Mr. Seaward's dog-cart was to meet them, they found it not; but a pony chaise, with two perfect little animals driven by a beautiful young lady, attended by a groom on horseback. The pony carriage occupied the space at the bottom of the steps, at the top of which stood the two gentlemen with their portmanteaus, half hid behind some pillars which supported the roof of the wooden steps.

“Go up and see if the parcel be come,” said an imperious voice.

The man gave the bridle of his horse to the hand of a boy, and ran up the steps, nearly upsetting the travellers in his haste.

"Any parcel here by passenger train for Miss Petrel, of Abbotsland?"

"No parcel with any such address," said the indifferent official.

"There is none, miss," said the groom, returning.

"It *must* have come," said the lady, with childish impatience. "Go up again."

The groom did not like the foolish errand.

"Shall I desire them to send the parcel over by a porter as soon as it comes?" asked he.

"Yes, by a man on horseback," and having something reasonable to say he ran up the stairs again, and delivered the message, and having regained his horse the young lady drove off, not before the gentlemen had caught sight of a handsome profile, shaded in the upper part by a hat. The same feeling unexpressed, kept Cassilis and Jack Knight perdu. They knew they should appear to a disadvantage, dusty and travel soiled, in the eyes of the young divinity of Abbotsland.

"That is your cousin, I suppose," observed Jack, as the pony carriage drove off. "She is handsome, but not to be compared to the beauty in the small house on the esplanade."

"I don't know that," replied Cassilis, who was out of temper at the delay of his groom, and the chance of being seen at a disadvantage by his cousin.

He glanced at his companion, and thought how very niggardly of beauty and grace had nature been in her gifts to his friend. How soft deposits of dust rested in the folds of his neckcloth, on the collar and lappets of his coat, and on the brim of his black hat, and Cassilis augured of his own state from that of his companion.

"I wonder where that confounded fellow William may be," he cried, growing more and more angry, as he thought that his cousin would have returned to Abbeylands, and be ready to see their arrival as they drove up to the door.

He was angry with his friend for being ugly, for his groom for being late, and for the roads for being dusty.

Presently the welcome vehicle made its appearance. The neat groom was ready with a valid reason for delay. The horse had cast a shoe, and he had waited for ten minutes to have it replaced. The portmanteaus were

lifted, the travellers seated, and Cassilis recovered his good temper with the swinging trot of his cabriolet horse.

"I could easily pass Miss Margaret," he said, "but I suppose it would not be civil."

When he came in sight of the pony carriage, it was to see it turn down a different road. Miss Petrel was going to call at the house of an acquaintance, seemingly, as the road led to a lodge gate. This gave Cassilis time to reach home, and attain to the sanctity of his bedroom before he revealed himself and his friend to the criticising glances of Mrs. Seaward.

"It is really strange," thought Cassilis, "but Jack seems to have turned up his nose more than usual to day, and his figure is more clumsy than ever. Our friends pass muster in our own minds till we have to produce them to society, and then we begin our criticism in dread of theirs."

Jack looked far more gentlemanlike when he was, as it were, swept and garnished.

"My dear fellow!" he cried. "I feel like the snails in the Burdock grove, quite alive to the future glory of being served up in a

silver dish, metaphorically, at the table of your step-father ; but, nevertheless, I am not so cold blooded as the snails, and I hope you will not utterly desert me."

"The best thing I can do is to introduce you to my step-father and mother at once," cried Cassilis. "Come along ! Stand on your hind legs ! Don't stoop and drop your long arms before you like a bear who is compelled to scuffle along in a posture uneasy to himself."

"If you are so impertinent, Master Cas, I shall box your ears," said Jack, laughing good-naturedly, to get rid of the pain given by the rough play of his companion's speech.

Cassilis sought his father first, and found him in the library—that library, in which sixteen years before Pleasance had cast her wondering eyes on the multitudinous books, on the globes, and the luxurious arm chairs, one of which had supported the frame of the man who was to decide on her fate. Mr. Seaward had altered but little in the interval. The leather of the library table was a shade more pale ; but the tray for pens stood in the same spot, and the Testament on which the

oaths were administered at the same angle. Then Mr. Pike had sat by his side. Mr. Seaward knew nothing of him then but as a wealthy man, manager and part proprietor of Wheal Constance. Mr. Seaward's head had a little more shine on the summit, and a few more threads of silver in the curls. But he had been tranquil and prosperous in life, and took matters easily.

Cassilis had distinguished himself at college; that was agreeable. Had he been plucked, his step-father would have found some consolation—no doubt in the youth's want of application. "He could have done anything had he chosen to read, but he was too quick to put up with the dull routine of study." If parents can thus console themselves they are fortunate in their belief of a fallacy. The cleverest men have the greatest powers of application.

And where was he who had been the occupant of the other easy chair on that day, so miserable to the poor mine girl, Pleasance Fern? Mr. Pike could no longer prosecute his career of vice, nor punish rebellious bucking girls.

Paralytic, from partial ossification of the brain, he sat always in his dressing-room, attended by a faithful wife and dutiful daughters, as tenderly as if his character had been moral, and his career unstained by vice. But no care or tenderness could mitigate the terrible infliction under which he suffered. He spoke sometimes wild babblings about the past, which those near him regarded as the wandering of a diseased brain. He had no power of selection. Like the culprits in the Palace of Truth, he revealed the images of the past in their frightful truth, when led by the skilful interrogator to bygone years. With the present he had little to do. He forgot those who had ministered to his wants half an hour before, and whined his unreasonable complaints that his servant did not bring the dinner which he had just finished eating.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Is the loud music I gave order for ready?"

THE introduction of Jack to Mr. Seaward proved very satisfactory, and the mother of Cassilis, coming in with a hand full of answers to invitations, was exceedingly courteous to the new comer. N.B.—There were fifteen lady acceptances to every ten gentlemen.

"I hope you are fond of dancing, Mr. Knight," she said, in her softest of tones.

"Madam," replied Jack, "I am so devoted to that exercise, that I grudge the moments my partners delay in sipping lemonade and negus, and can only survive their devotion to the supper table by getting some fair creature who has had her turn in eating to twirl round

in a waltz to my own singing. Musicians loiter shamefully over their champagne supper," he added, in an aggrieved tone.

"Then I may call on you without scruple," responded the lady. "Really, Cassilis, I wish you had brought some one or two others as obliging as Mr. Knight."

"I would have done so, my dear mamma, but Jack has not his equal anywhere any more than myself."

"Then I hope you mean to dance more than I have ever seen you do hitherto. It *must* be done. My dear boy, you do not know, you have not the remotest idea, how badly a ball goes off when there are more ladies than gentlemen."

Here there was an interruption, for Miss Petrel appeared at the door in her out-door costume, just as she had stepped from her pony chaise. She smiled and blushed when she saw her handsome cousin, who, as her nurse had whispered, was to be her future husband. She placed her small gloved hand in his with the happy confidence of old acquaintanceship.

"Margaret," said Cassilis, "permit me to

introduce to your notice my friend Knight, the best dancer in Christendom."

Margaret curtsied with less grace than her namesake, not having studied the minuet since she was seven years old, but it passed off very well, aided by her youth and her beauty.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Seaward, "I must speak to you for a few minutes. Come this way. Mr. Knight and your cousin will excuse you." And Mrs. Seaward passing her little plump arm through the muscular one of her son, walked him out on the lawn, and began her confidences. "My dear, your step-father is so very provoking! He is so very tranquil and serene, as Irish bogs are always green."

"Surely that must be a most desirable state with regard to the partner of his life," observed her son.

"Cassilis, nothing but my deep sense of religious duty prevents me from trying to provoke him into the exhibition of some amount of feeling on some one subject or another. When I tell him I can get no men for my ball, he says, 'The girls must dance

together,' and does not care. He does not care for this, nor that, nor the other; and really, were I to die, I do not think he would care any more for my loss."

"My poor dear stepfather! what an unhappy state of mind!" observed Cassilis, checking his risibility; "but what is the present insensibility?"

"He does not care about our not getting any men, and men I must have, Cassilis. I have never given a ball before; I never thought of doing such a very doubtful kind of act; but Lady Thirston and the Honourable Mrs. Davenent have given them—such successful parties. You see, they have a much larger acquaintance than we have. I really do not think I should have ventured on such an out-of-the-way thing as giving a ball, only Jane said she knew I could not, and that piqued me, so I sent out the invitations, and this is the result," and his mother seemed ready to shed tears.

"My dear mother," said the youth, "send excuses all round; let some sudden business call you to town, or, as the widow says in the burlesque 'Lady of Lyons,' 'Let's all be taken ill.'"

"You are as bad as your father, Cassilis," said the lady, reddening, "when my mind is set on this ball."

"I will think what can be done. How many spare beds can you make up?"

"Oh, very few, compared to the number of guests I require."

"I will go over to X——, and call on and invite the officers; but remember, they will not take the trouble of coming twelve miles unless their horses can be well attended, and that will lead to the grooms and coachmen having supper. Moreover, for men who come from a greater distance, you must provide beds."

"But how can I?"

"Take them to the nearest hotel, and pay the bill. You must not grudge your money if the thing is to be well done. Let me take the management, and I promise you shall have no trouble, and the affair shall go off well. You are sure my father will not object?"

"Oh, no; but Cassilis, what think you of Margaret? Is she not grown? Is she not improved by her residence abroad? Is she not beautiful?"

"Yes ; she is all you say, no doubt. I will take it all on your assertion for the present. You see, I shall have no time to look at pretty girls yet. But, my mother, how much may I spend on this ball of yours ?"

"Just as much as you please, my dear. I have a fine income of my own now, with which your stepfather never interferes. Spare nothing to make my party brilliant."

Cassilis was proud of and pleased with his new occupation. To succeed in the conducting of a refined and beautiful result in an entertainment was a novel sphere of action. It was pleasant not to be cramped for money, but though on pleasure he was bent, he had a frugal mind, and meant to combine economy with splendour as far as he could. It was too late to go into the highways and hedges that day to compel guests to accept his mother's invitations, but he found that though not more than five days remained before hungry-eyed dowagers and no less eager unmarried ladies would arrive, some intent on suppers and some on partners, nothing had been done in the way of lighting, or band, or refreshments, so Cassilis sat down to write and to

telegraph to the different persons who were most likely to fulfil his orders promptly and efficiently.

He had an aptitude for organization and a power of developing resources, yet the ball-room taxed all his inventive faculties. There was ample space in it for set after set of quadrilles, for it had probably been planned and erected in the reign of Catholic processions, but in the course of time the chapel became a banqueting room, and then had been hung with dark tapestry, which resisted every effort of wax-candles or gas-light to illuminate the hangings. To remove valuable tapestry was not to be thought of, and after a night of anxious thought Cassilis set off to London by the first train to see what the resources of the metropolis could supply, trusting to being in time to call on the officers after his return.

In the meantime we must return to "poor Jack," whom we left standing in Mr. Seaward's library. Mr. Seaward felt there could be no real sympathy between himself and a youth of three and twenty. He wished to rid himself of both the young folks, so he

said, "Margaret, I daresay Mr. Knight would like to see the conservatories. You are in your out-door dress, so you had better show him through the houses."

Margaret looked at Jack to see if he were willing, and perceiving a look of alacrity in his merry eyes, she said, "Come," taking up her parasol, and Mr. Seaward, with a sigh of relief, resumed his paper.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“He has laughed on the maid with his merry blue eye.”

MRS. SEAWARD, when she had made Cassilis properly interested in the occupation she had given him, thought it time to return and see what had become of Margaret, whom she had left in the library.

“Where is the child, my dear?” she asked of her husband.

“Of whom do you speak—Margaret? Oh, I sent her out to show the conservatory to young Knight.”

“My dear, how could you do anything so improper?”

“Why, you know, Clarinda, you call her a child, so it can be no harm.”

“Where is my sister?—where is Jane?”

"She has gone to lie down with one of her headaches."

"Well, Mr. Seaward, if Jane's cherished plan for our children's welfare is frustrated, it will be the result of your carelessness."

"My dear Clara, you have often told me that our marriage was made in heaven. Now I cannot believe that heaven would be guilty of such gross injustice to prefer one couple to another—ergo, if Margaret is to marry Cassilis it will take place, notwithstanding what you call my carelessness, which was really my carefulness of my own comfort in getting rid of two young folks who bored me."

Mrs. Seaward left her husband in despair of obtaining sympathy in her little plans. "He is incapable of sympathy," she said to herself, with her little plump features becoming set with resentment. "He is really capable of opposing my wishes," but a remembrance of eighteen years of undisputed sway re-assured her—she should do in all things as she had hitherto done.

In one particular the tranquil husband was restive: he would neither give up his dressing-room for an additional bedroom, nor his

library for a supper or card-room. His books were *his* friends, and they should not run any risk of disturbance. My own opinion is, that had he had any daughters his position would have been untenable.

“Ye gods, annihilate all time and space,
And make the dancers happy,”

is the unreasonable wish of young folks giving a dance.

Cassilis at length suggested to his step-father that two whist tables might stand without crowding the library table, where the old fogies might retreat from the heat and dust and noise, and have some comfortable hours of that game, of which the name “whist” signifies that it requires profound silence. Mr. Seaward was a good player himself, so he yielded.

Mrs. Seaward walked at an unusually quick pace after the truants, vituperating in her heart her husband for having turned the young folks loose, and her sister Jane for her inconvenient headache.

Reader, did you ever hunt for a couple supposed to be undesirous of being overtaken in

the heat of a summer afternoon, feeling your sense of injury increase with the increased glow of the sunshine? Mrs. Seaward had only one resemblance to Hamlet, or to the player who would act that character in Shakespeare's time, and for whom it was written, probably, that he was "fat and scant of breath," otherwise we cannot imagine such attributes belonging to one who watched for supernatural shadows, and burnt for revenge long delayed. But the plumpness and difficulty of respiration belonged in this case to one who was in the manner of her life like the fat weed that rots in ease by Lethe's wharf.

Mrs. Seaward went first to the greenhouses, and was welcomed by an increased heat on to the hot-houses, where a blast of hot vapour greeted her. "Oh! they *cannot* be here," she thought, going on to the pineries. She rushed out at the further door, passing, in her haste, a tree laden with ripe purple figs, of which she was very fond. On she went through pleached alleys of fruit-trees without a breath of air between them. She could see no glimpse of Margaret's light blue silk dress,

nor of the white ostrich feather in her hat. The sense of a tropical climate in the kitchen garden made her draw back. The walls, covered with the supported branches of fruit, gave out heat which was reflected from the broad box-bordered gravel path, or rather road, as it had been sometimes used for a carriage. She stopped at the house of the old gardener.

"Have you seen Miss Petrel lately?" said the lady.

"Can't see her nowhere," said the old man.

"Then she did not come this way?"

"Hai?" cried the veteran, putting his hand to his ear.

"Oh, you stupid old owl! Did—Miss—Pet—rel—go—this—way?" Mrs. Seaward cried, shouting out every syllable separately.

"Can't say," the gardener shouted back from sympathy with the raised voice.

The increased exertion had made Mrs. Seaward hotter. She abandoned hope. "They have gone back to the house. Jane should look after her own girl, instead of lying all the afternoon with her nose buried in the pillow."

So Mrs. Seaward returned home, and found,

by reference to her looking-glass, that her flushed face would become of a brown tan to-morrow, and she subsided into a loose dressing-gown and applications of elder-flower water. The old gentleman saw her depart, and chuckled. "Poor young things! it wasn't likely I was going to tell on them, that they were down in the grove by the water's edge. Nice and cool this hot afternoon. Missus looked as if she comed out of a hoven."

Jack Knight accustomed to the atmosphere and sights of streets and squares, felt in a new world in the wilderness of groves and glooms, and cultured flowers. Margaret had conducted him first to the greenhouses, and then conducted him to her favourite seat in the woodland near the water, which was all the more pleasant for the torrid zone, as she called the kitchen garden, through which they passed. Besides the interest any young man would take in the society of a beautiful girl of fifteen, just about to take her place in society, Jack was curious to know what might be her feelings toward her step-cousin Cassilis.

She talked with such charming simplicity and freedom, to himself, that he saw she had no idea that their spending so long a period together in the afternoon, was an unusual occurrence. She had the unconscious charm of guilelessness. Always having considered that she was the affianced wife of her cousin, she considered any other man as indifferent to her as one of another sex could be. In the band of her dress was a flower which she had gathered in coming through the greenhouse; some slight movement of her hand snapt the brittle stem and it fell on the turf at her feet. Jack Knight picked it up.

"Is it not pretty," she said, "do you know its name?"

"It is the *tropæolum tricolorum*," said Jack, "There, I am quite proud of my floral knowledge."

"Probably you study botany," said the young lady.

"No, but I observed this blossom in a bouquet which Forrester purchased the day we left."

"Dear me! does he buy bouquets generally?"

"No, not generally. Perhaps it was in-

tended for Mrs. Knight. I did not see it on my mother's drawing-room table," replied Jack drily.

Margaret meditated, she did not choose to show more interest than she had already exhibited, but the subject had made her grave, and in her gravity she looked very much as her cousin had appeared on the last morning Jack had seen her. Her face generally had more softness and less intelligence. The forehead was not so fully developed as in the dweller by the sea. Her step was less firm and elastic, and her figure less upright. The sea air which stunts the vegetable creation, gives vigour to the growing young of all animals, but she was a lovely girl, Jack thought, though he would have said like the fat boy in *Pickwick*, "I knows a nicerer." It was very hard he thought that Cassilis Forrester should monopolise two young girls so beautiful, and one so rich. With the foolish disinterested passion of youth, he thought he would gladly choose the poor girl if she would accept him, and leave the rich lady to his friend; "and a very fortunate man he would be if he attain such a prize," added the youth in his meditations.

He walked back to the house by the side of his fair companion, but the conversation was forced and constrained, by the consciousness of a secret sought on one side and withheld on the other; the young folks did not get over it till Margaret showed Jack Knight the croquet ground, which was beautifully placed under the shadows of some lofty beeches. Jack said it wanted a roller, and Margaret feared the gardeners were all so busy now, that she should not, she supposed be attended to, on which Jack declared if next day she would show him where to find a roller he would do it himself.

"Then I shall work like a second Ferdinand, for it is harder than carrying logs," said Jack.

"Ferdinand the Second," said the girl puzzled, who had learned history but was forbidden to read plays.

Jack, who could not conceive such ignorance, thought she was satirical at his expense and meant to laugh at his inference that she was Miranda. This put him out of countenance.

"I suppose you think no one has a right to call himself Ferdinand nor to work to please his mistress who has a pug nose."

"Indeed ! I never thought about it, but I shall be very much obliged if you will roll the croquet ground for me."

Jack was pacified. Margaret did not meet Cassilis till dinner-time, when she was very quiet. The difference between the two girls was more marked when the one present was without her hat. The sea-side Margaret, Margaret the nereid, as Jack called her, wore her hair like that of Canova's Venus. The style suited the perfection of her outline and the brilliancy of her tint. Margaret the nymph, as he designated her who roamed through the woods of Abbotsland, wore hers in the fashion of the day covering the forehead, which was too low for perfect beauty. The form of the back of the head was lost in the bundle of materials with which it was encumbered and over which the hair was gathered. As the young men watched her at dinner they began to think that the likeness was far less than they had at first supposed and before the dessert was placed on the table they saw so many discrepancies that they marvelled that they had ever seen any likeness between the two young ladies.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.'"

WHEN the young men retired to rest at night they talked a few minutes in Jack's room. Cassilis looked perturbed.

"Knight," he said, "I do not wish you to say anything about Miss Petrel, the one down there, I mean, at present."

"No, old fellow, of course not, I should not think of such a thing without your permission."

"You see," continued Cassilis, "I don't want to worry my mother till this ball is over. She has been very liberal in allowing me a carte-blanche to do as I please, and I wish to please her in this matter, all the more as I may want her indulgence afterwards."

"You did not talk to your cousin much at dinner," observed Jack.

"To tell the truth, I was so busy calculating how many lights would be required to illuminate that sombrous dining-room, that I forgot all about my cousin. In so small a party the conversation must be general, and young girls do not talk much as a rule. In this they are perfectly right: to 'softly speak and sweetly smile,' assent to anything propounded to them by the nobler sex, is their legitimate part in the drama of society."

"A very lordly idea," said Jack, yawning. "And now, my boy, good-night. I am sleepy."

Cassilis retired to rest, and tried to recal the image of the nereid, but it was strangely blurred already in his memory. He was angry with himself for this involuntary forgetfulness; but the face of her cousin obtruded itself between him and the remembrance of the absent beauty. Like, yet very unlike, the two faces blended into one; and around them both came a vision of sparkling chandeliers and gaslights, and pillars encircled with wreaths of roses, and all the paraphernalia of

forthcoming festivities, to be provided by himself, at his mother's expense.

On the following morning Cassilis went to London to see to the execution of the orders he had given, and to receive answers which he had directed to be prepared for him. Of this the sisters could not complain. He had undertaken the conduct of this eventful party in obedience to his mother's wishes, and was of course making a sacrifice of his own wishes in leaving the society of his cousin. That any young man who had hitherto shown himself to be so dutiful, should presume to think for himself on a point so mixed up with his future happiness as love and marriage, was an atrocity on his part not to be tolerated or even suspected.

The result of the occupation of Cassilis in London was that Jack Knight was left to his own resources. Mr. Seaward offered him a riding-horse ; but Jack, accustomed to live in a town, did not fancy endangering his own life and the animal's knees by any experiments in horsemanship. He thanked his host, and said he would prefer finding his own amusement about the park.

When he was free of the house he found his way to the gardens, and, by a fee to the gardener, obtained possession of a heavy roller ; and when Margaret's stepmother and aunt took a turn in the park after luncheon, accompanied this time by their young charge, they discovered Jack in the distance, a striking contrast of black and white ; for he had thrown off his coat and waistcoat, and the sun shone brightly on his chest and shirt-sleeves.

The two elder ladies put their glasses to their eyes.

"Bless me ! there is Mr. Knight. What can *he* be doing there ?"

"Oh !" said Margaret, very guiltily, "I said that the gardeners were too busy to level my croquet ground before the ball, and he said kindly that he would do it himself for me."

"I wish, sister Clarinda," observed Jane, "that your son would not invite such kind of people to the house."

"I do not know what you mean by *such* kind of people, sister Jane. I suppose my son may be trusted to invite the young men

with whom he has been accustomed to associate at school and at college. I wish he had brought home a dozen of them, as partners for the women at our ball."

"It would have been better—walk on, Margaret." When she was in the distance Mrs. Petrel went on. "It would have been more judicious had I remained at Birchland Rectory with Margaret till the morning of the ball. You see, my dear Clarinda, what that young man's manners are. Exhibiting himself before three ladies—one of them unmarried—without his coat—half dressed, in fact!"

"Well, Jane, Mr. Knight is here, and here he must remain. I would advise you to send Margaret home with her maid till the morning of the ball, when she can return with Mr. Petrel."

Jane, who had found fault for the sake of doing so, had not expected such prompt action to be taken by her sister, who went on—

"I do not wonder, Jane, at your being fidgetty; you live in such complete seclusion at Birchland, that you cannot know anything of the usages of society."

"I suppose the usages of society do not permit a man to go about half dressed?" Mrs. Petrel replied, pettishly.

"Poor Mr. Knight did not expect to see us out before luncheon. It was very good-natured of him to roll the croquet ground. But you know nothing of the world, my dear Jane. A woman who has been twice married
——"

Here the speakers passed out of hearing; only it was observed that the elder and thinner lady moved more perpendicularly, and drew her shawl across her in tighter folds, whilst her plump companion had a little amble in her walk, which announced her triumph.

The result was, however, that Mrs. and Miss Petrel took a long journey home after luncheon, to return with Mr. Petrel on the day preceding the ball.

Jack watched the departure without much emotion. He hoped Cassilis would return in the evening, and be more of a companion to him than he had hitherto proved himself to be at Abbotsland.

Cassilis did not miss his cousin till dinner-

time, and did not very much regret her absence. He told himself that Jack would not be by any means a good match for her, and he owed it to his relationship not to permit Margaret to make a bad one. Of the other Margaret he meant to think when he had time. His brain was in such a whirl with orders for supper and wine, lighting, ices, and band, the beds to be ordered at the hotel, and the transport of guests to and from the railway station, that the quiet image of Margaret, the nereid, in the dusky window of the small seaside house, faded into indistinctness. He had an ardent wish to produce her amongst the other guests, to eclipse all the beauties who could be collected from three counties; but that could not be yet. His imagination flew forward to the period when he might bring her in triumph to Abbotsland as his bride. In the meantime, he must please his mother, by doing well what he had undertaken to do.

In the meantime Mrs. Petrel and her step-daughter returned to Birchland: a surprise, and, like all surprises, a failure, as to the amount of pleasure given or received. It was

not often that the second Mrs. Petrel consented to leave her lord and master at home ; but he had become restive, seemingly, and had declared decidedly that, till the question of parish rating was settled, he would not leave home. In truth, he had a little scheme for his own amusement in the absence of his wife. It was out of all reason that, in the course of fifteen years, with good will in the hearts of both the father and the daughter, and a mutually understood, but unexpressed, dislike of their female tyrant, they should not come to some overt act of reconciliation. The seeming estrangement had gone on for some months, when Mary hatched a little scheme of her own. Her father was in the habit of remaining in the vestry for a few minutes after the congregation had departed. There was generally a little talk about parish matters with the clerk. There was sympathy between the clerk and his clerk, besides that which resulted from their compelled association in clerical matters. The subordinate was small, dark, and very handsome, and ten years younger than his superior. Each had a keen eye for a good horse ; each

enjoyed a run with the hounds, or a coursing meeting or a stolen glimpse at races. When, in the influx of children, one solitary horse had been all that remained, Jim always knew where to hire another: handsome and sporting-looking, though broken down. Out of these hirings Jim was in the habit of making a somewhat larger per centage than was quite fair, till, one dark night, when driving homeward through a narrow lane, Mr. Petrel upset the dog-cart, and Jim was flung to some distance. He was stunned for a few minutes, and, as he told a friend, "*unsensed*."

"When I began to feel alive again," said he, "master was a-hanging over me, and I felt the tears a falling down over my face, and he was a-saying, 'Jim! my dear Jim! if you are alive, speak to me.' 'Sir! master,' says I—'I ar'n't much the wuss. I ain't got no bones broke that I knows on. Let's git the 'oss up.'"

The horse was aided to regain his legs, the dog-cart raised, and they drove home in subdued spirits—Mr. Petrel a little ashamed of the exhibition of interest he had made in the life of his clerk. After that event the hire of horses was lessened, for Jim loved his master

more than himself from the distress he had exhibited.

Mary knew of the attachment subsisting between the pair, and coming to the vestry, where Jim was reverently placing the surplice and gown in their proper chest, she said—

“Get out, James, I want to speak to your master;” and then, shutting the vestry door on the inside, she rushed at Mr. Petrel, and jumping up flung her arms around his neck, kissing his ruddy cheeks and white forehead and bald head repeatedly, laughing with tear-filled eyes as she did so.

The father twinkled, and spoke hoarsely when he tried to articulate. He embraced his daughter warmly, and assured her that he forgave her.

“Forgive me! of course you do, papa; and by the time you come to the bottom of this box of cigars,” she added, taking up a parcel which she had placed on the vestry table before she had begun her greetings, “you will be convinced that Harry, who sent them to you with his kind regards and duty, is the very best fellow that ever lived—I assure you I have found him so.”

So a liking was established between the young brewer and his father-in-law. Both were partial to good cigars; and Mr. Petrel much admired getting them for nothing. Mr. Tyril, on his part, was industrious, and wealthy enough to afford to make handsome presents without after penalty of self-reproach.

When Mrs. Petrel returned with Margaret, expecting to be welcomed by a semblance of rejoicing, she found an empty dining and drawing-room, without a single light in either; and discovered that her husband had been out for some days, and was not expected back till Sunday. This was intolerable: not only had Mr. Petrel transgressed, but he had removed himself beyond the reach of reproaches.

"Are you quite sure Mr. Petrel is not coming back to-night?"

"He took linen enough to last till Sunday."

Mrs. Petrel, now, could only as her last resource turn upon Margaret, and reproach her as being the cause of her discomfort.

"But for you, I might have remained at Abbotsland, miss," she said.

"But why did we come back here?" re-

torted Margaret. "I did not wish it in the least. It would have been such an amusement to see all the preparations for the ball."

"I did not like that young man whom Cassilis brought: a very improper person, appearing in *my* presence without his coat or waistcoat."

"I think he meant to please me," said the girl, "and if he is ugly he is very obliging."

Mrs. Petrel drew what consolation she could out of the admission of Jack's ugliness, and having nothing more to say the pair went to bed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Come and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe."

THE guests had all accepted ; and oh ! the bliss ! the exertions of Cassilis had secured a just amount of the male sex. The next day the ball-room was to be made a scene of unusual brilliancy, by having magnificent looking-glasses placed over the tapestry. Between them there were to be wreaths of silver and pink roses. Green leaves would have been more like nature, but green is a difficult colour to light. "All went merry as a marriage bell," when a telegram arrived one morning to say that a great uncle of Mr. Seaward's, aged ninety-seven, was dangerously ill.

"Bless me ! What is to be done ?" cried Mrs. Seaward. "At ninety-seven, there is no chance of his living over my ball."

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Seaward. The ball must be given up."

"Mr. Seaward!"

"Yes, my dear."

"Fancy the disappointment, sir!" said Cassilis.

"My boy, I am not going to have a band playing and you capering over the grave of my uncle, as soon as he is placed in the earth."

"I must say," said Mrs. Seaward, with a sigh, "that he has been most indiscreet, first in living such an unconscionable time, and then in taking this opportunity to be dangerously ill, just when we had rather he should have lived."

Mr. Seaward, senior, was the possessor of a large property, which would accrue to Mr. Seaward on his great uncle's death.

Cassilis sighed. He must put a stop for the present to all the gay preparations, all his fine plans were frustrated. His stepfather started at once for the residence of his great-uncle, whom he found dead on his arrival. A week must elapse before the funeral, mourning must be ordered in the place of ball-

dresses. The gaieties must be postponed for a few weeks.

Cassilis was dispirited. He had trusted to the success of his exertions on behalf of his mother's party to open her heart to her son's wishes with regard to the absent Margaret. He tried to discover the earliest period when the ball might take place, but Mrs. Seaward was so girt round with decorum that she seemed to consider it sinful to speak on so gay a topic.

"I suppose I ought not to show myself anywhere—that is, in any place of amusement?" said the young man petulantly.

"Certainly not," was his mother's reply.

"Then," said the youth, "I will go abroad, down the Rhine, or to Switzerland, anywhere, anywhere out of the world." He felt himself bound to return and redeem his half-expressed vow, but he could not offer to marry a young lady when he had no income on which to support her : nor any profession by which he might hope to be independent before he was of age. He could only now hope to marry by his mother's giving up some of her income for his benefit ; with the usual incon-

sequence of youth, he quite expected to enjoy the comforts of three or four thousand a-year on an income of five or six hundred.

By the provisions of his father's will Cassilis was not to become of age till his twenty-eighth birthday.

Jack Knight returned to Devonport. He was promised a renewed invitation when the ball really came off. He walked down and looked at the needlessly levelled croquet ground before he left, and made Cassilis observe how excellently he had performed his task.

"It will soon be spoilt again," he said gloomily, "with earth-worms and moles, and bits of broken twigs and tufts of coarse grass. Such a fine space too!" he continued, with a burst of melancholy enthusiasm. Then he looked round slyly at Cassilis. "I shall see the fair Gabrielle soon," he continued, "any message, eh?"

"None," replied Cassilis shortly.

"Oh well! I am sorry I spoke."

"I do not mind what you say, old fellow! you see I am rather put out about my disappointment as to this party, and I feel I am acting rather cavalierly to you in sending you

back without having given you any gratification."

"‘What is delayed is not forgotten,’ old man! I shall come again."

"That is true: ‘what is delayed is not forgotten;’ I shall remember the proverb. Good-bye."

"I should like to see the wood-nymph again," Jack thought, "I don't see why that young gentleman should monopolize two nice girls; I declare they might pass for twins."

When Jack returned home, he had to undergo the usual amount of cross-questioning from his family, as to all he had seen and heard and partaken. His brother asked how many horses Forrester's father kept. Mrs. Knight inquired carelessly as to the age of Mrs. Seaward, and of what fashion were her caps, also of how many courses were the ordinary dinners composed. Jack did his best in satisfying the family curiosity, and then asked if they had any news to give in return.

"No, nothing particular."

"How is Mrs. Heathdale?"

"Oh! past hope, Mr. Peterson says—heart disease—she is still alive though."

The next day was Sunday, and Jack went to church. Margaret was in her usual place, looking rather paler than usual. Jack wished to speak to her, but she hastened out of church quicker than usual, being in a hurry to get home and assist her mother's watching of the sick. In the evening Jack did not see why he might not call and inquire after Mrs. Heathdale. It was so late that most of the gay folks had left the Esplanade.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"He made the desperate passes when he smiled."

DRYDEN.

MARGARET was walking with a hurried step, she had been evidently sent out to walk up and down so many times for the good of her health from one point to another, and was bent on getting through the last as soon as possible. Jack walked after her at a pace as quick as her own, and confronted her as she turned suddenly. The sight of Jack made her beautiful face flush with crimson, and a light of pleasure flashed from her dark blue eyes.

"Ah, Mr. Knight!" she cried, in a breathless sort of manner.

At first Jack's colour was as brilliant as that of Margaret's, on finding what an effect his unexpected appearance had created, but

the flush subsided as he reasoned, or rather felt intuitively : “ ‘ I am not the rose but I have dwelt near it,’ as the Persian poet says ; it is for this cause I am greeted so favourably.”

“ Must you walk so fast, Miss Petrel ? I shall be unable to talk at this pace, and I have rather a love of talking when I can get a listener.”

“ You had better—begin—at—once,” said the girl, somewhat blown by her previous quick-march up and down the Esplanade, “ before I recover—breath—enough—to—take—my share——”

“ Then, as the Frenchman said of his opponent, ‘ if he sneezes now he is lost,’ for I shall break in,” replied Jack. Then he observed more gravely, “ Tell me how is Mrs. Petrel ; I do not ask after your invalid—I have already heard.”

“ My mother is worn with anxiety, the anxiety which is conscious that the cause of it can have but one termination ; but do not let us talk of what cannot be helped or altered.” She turned, and looking at Jack playfully, said, “ There is a beautiful

song by Mrs. Hemans, where a lady is addressing a knight, and speculating in what scenes he last had mingled,

‘Thou hast not been to the hall of song,
Nor the pouring of the wine,
Men bear not from the festive throng
So dark a brow as thine.’”

“Though I am a Knight,” said Jack, “I assure you that I have not been

‘Where the shuddering wind goes sobbing by,’

in the Roncesvalles Strait nor in any halls of song—did the poetess mean music halls? The gaieties never came off. It was as bad as cooking a dinner one was predestined not to eat, or practising for a concert which was never to be performed. I did think that though my general clumsy ugliness cut me out of our home performances, I might find some good-natured girl wanting a partner who would have taken pity on me. Fancy, too, how one’s imagination was excited. I was told there were to be six young ladies to every young gentleman—a ball after a kind of Mormon fashion. Then, suddenly, after I

had duly fallen in love, and levelled a croquet ground to a degree of perfection which is still notified to me by my aching biceps, suddenly came a telegram announcing the dangerous illness of a relative, and we fled away, Cassilis and I, like pigeons scared at the report of a gun."

This was the first reference to Mr. Forrester, and Margaret took no outward notice, though her heart was beating wildly. If he had flown off, he might be round the corner at that very moment. There was a cruel pause in Jack's narrative.

"I'll punish her," he thought, "for preferring that handsome fellow to me—ugliness has its right to retaliation."

At length Margaret said—

"Well?"

"Ah! let me see; where was I?"

"You were scared——"

"Yes, I remember! Now I'll tell you all I lost."

He paused again.

"Six young ladies," suggested Margaret.

"I must confess," said Jack, "that the Mormonish inequality had been put right by

my friend's incursion on the barracks ; but I must tell you about the tapestry room, sixty feet long and thirty wide, of which the sides were to have been covered by looking-glasses. Outside the entrance there was to have been the word 'Margaret' in coloured lamps, in honour of the young lady for whom the glory of the fête was destined. Then there was to have been the best band, the best supper, and the best wines that London could produce, and

'No rest till morn, when love and pleasure meet
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet.'

"What did you think of Miss Petrel?" asked Margaret. "Is—is—she—do I resemble her?"

"I thought there was an extraordinary likeness when I first saw the lady," said Jack; "and I believe Forrester was also struck with the resemblance. As I became more familiar with the play of Miss Petrel's countenance, the likeness disappeared."

Margaret was bursting with curiosity to know which had the advantage in personal appearance. Jack had no idea of revealing

the truth. Young ladies should not be made conceited," he said to himself.

"When is the deferred ball to be given—or is it put off *sine die*?" asked the young lady.

"Some time in the autumn, I believe," Jack replied. "I think it is probable that before the new year dawns that young lady may change her name to that of Forrester. The parents seem to have so decided, and I did not observe any reluctance on the part of the principals of the arrangement."

"Very likely such a union would turn out very prosperously. Dr. Johnson says somewhere that if marriages were decided by selections made, of persons unknown to each other, by the Lord Chancellor, they would produce quite the usual amount of happiness."

"Very likely," said Jack, who lost his desire to torment when the young lady seemed to be unassailable. He did not know the effort which it required to prevent Margaret's voice going off into a wail of grief and despondency.

"I suppose you left your friend at Abbotsland mourning over his broken plans," said Margaret, at length, determined to know the worst at once.

"Oh, no! 'What is delayed is not forgotten,' Forrester said, to comfort himself. He has started for the continent. 'Should go to Paris first,' he said, and decide afterwards what should become of him for the rest of the summer. I should not be astonished if some of his family joined him, that they might travel together. I only wish I had money enough to do likewise. But it is not every man who is born with a golden spoon in his mouth, or even with a silver one; and mine was but fashioned of 'meagre lead,' which I must try to gild in the best way I can."

Margaret stopped at the gate leading to the garden of the small house, and leaned on the palings till Jack had finished speaking.

"Good-night," she said, quietly, holding out her hand; and he took it, and bade her good-night.

The windows were open in the small empty drawing-room, and the lamp lighted. Jack departed into the shadow on the opposite side, next the sea, and watched Margaret enter the room with a wearied, hopeless gait. She flung off her hat, and pushed back her dark hair from her forehead. Then she remem-

bered the open windows, and closed the Venetian blinds.

Jack went home rather conscience-stricken at the mischief he had tried to do, and the pain he thought, from that glimpse of her face and figure, that he had inflicted.

CHAPTER XXX.

“With beauty pleased awhile, anon disgusted,
Seeking some other toy.”

It was true that Margaret was suffering, all the more for the momentary glimpse of exultation and hope. She sat down inside the dropped blinds, and wept bitter tears of mortification and grief. She had been made the object of a young man's transient fancy, and he had not thought himself bound in honour or courtesy to carry out his half-uttered pledge.

This fact, which had been, when it was new, a secret source of pleasure, like fairy gold, gladdening the possessor with the thought of its sterling worth; now that it was found to have dwindled to withered leaves, Margaret made her mother welcome

to partake them with her. Her unhappiness was patent ; but human confidence, unlike Divine aid, does not answer to the precept, "Ask and ye shall have." If a question is put by one who is quivering with sympathetic anxiety to learn the answer, the sufferer immediately takes the alarm, and fences with every effort to obtain information. The stream must flow voluntarily ; striking the rock is useless.

One evening, in the twilight, Pleasance had left the invalid, who was sleeping, to the watchfulness of Sally, and had come down for the comfort of a cup of tea, to be taken out of the sick room, where everything reminded her of suffering. Margaret was leaning listlessly over the back of a chair, with her head on her clasped hands. Pleasance busied herself in making the tea and cutting some bread and butter for Margaret and herself. She and her sick friend had spoilt their girl by doing everything for her which could tend in any way to contribute to her comfort. Thus, the bread and butter was cut in delicate slices, and put within her reach. The tea was made by Pleasance, however weary

the maker might be ; and this mistaken kindness only gave the object of it more leisure to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancies. As the bitters generally preponderate in human life, it would have been better that Margaret should have been more actively employed, so that she should have had no leisure to dwell on such.

"The tea is ready, my dear," observed Pleasance, whose movements were so quiet that the girl scarcely was conscious that her mother was in the room.

She began to eat the bread and butter mechanically.

"Mother, it is just a week since my god-mother became worse."

"Yes, my dear." There was a pause, for Pleasance had felt aggrieved at Margaret's reticence, and of this Margaret, in the occupation of her selfish sorrow, had been unconscious.

"I know," she continued, "because it was on the day I saw Mr. Forrester last. Mother," she said impulsively, "I think he has behaved *very* ill."

"In what way?" Pleasance asked, with a

trembling voice, yet eager not to show too much anxiety, lest she should not be told all the circumstances.

Margaret sighed, and told her mother all that had occurred : of the verses, of which she remembered enough to convey their meaning to Pleasance. She had not herself considered them to be an indication of attachment, but, as she observed to her mother, they were some of the stories of which her fairy fabric had been constructed ; then of the bouquet of hot-house flowers, and his wish that the little western flower, purple with love's wound, might be amongst them, and the playful recommendation to anoint her eyelids with the juice.

Then at the parting : " My hope of future happiness depends on my return, and on the welcome I receive from you."

" Oh, Margaret !" cried Pleasance in a rapture of delight, " there can be but one interpretation to be placed on such words—he loves you, and means to marry you. Why did you conceal this from me, dear? Did you grudge that I should partake your happiness ?"

Margaret had not meant to be selfish ;

selfish people rarely go to the extent of saying to themselves "I will do thus and thus, and exclude my friend from sharing my enjoyment;" they simply do not think of any other than themselves. Margaret felt a little conscience-stricken. She had kept her cake for her own eating, but her crust of dry bread, moistened by bitter tears, she called upon her mother to partake.

"But mamma, I saw Mr. John Knight a few evenings since. He has been staying with Cassilis; and the ball, which was to have been given in honour of Miss Petrel, has been postponed for some months, and Mr. Forrester is gone abroad for an indefinite time, so, of course, he cannot intend to return," Margaret added, in a tone of profound melancholy.

"Oh, my child, I was miserable when your father left me and did not return. It was many weeks, and I was—oh, so wretched! I told myself that he would never come again, but in my heart of hearts I could never believe it. I knew if he was alive he would return, and he came back, and I was so very happy," said the tender-hearted woman, shedding tears at the memory of that brief sun-

shine in her life ; “ and Cassilis will come back to you, dear, just as your father did to me.”

Margaret shook her head, but she smiled also, and was in some degree comforted. Having told her secret, she was ever wishing to talk with her mother on the subject. Pleasance knew so little of the world, and had found in her lover such honour and truth—qualities which take root and flourish best in that seclusion from the general world, a ship—that of the worldly influences at work in society she was utterly ignorant. She knew that she had trusted, and never had reason to repent her confidence.

“ How long did papa keep you waiting ?”

“ Nearly three months,” replied Pleasance.

“ Surely he might have come sooner. What had kept him so long ?”

“ His skull was fractured,” said the widow ; and it may be doubted whether Margaret was much comforted by the chance of Forrester’s detention by a similar mischance.

When Mrs. Heathdale was lying tranquil one night with Pleasance as a watcher, Pleasance told her of the circumstances which had affected the happiness of their girl. She ex-

pressed herself confident of the ultimate happiness of Margaret in her love for Cassilis.

Mrs. Heathdale listened in silence.

"Did you hear what I said, my dear lady?" asked the mother, anxiously.

"Yes, my Pleasance."

"Then," said the mother, in a disappointed tone, "you do not agree with me in thinking hopefully of the chances of Margaret's happiness?"

"I do not say that; but your husband was five years younger than Mr. Forrester when he married you. Four years of his life had been passed on the ocean. Sailors are more impulsive, more generous, more imprudent, than landmen. Mr. Forrester is bound, as an honourable man, to return and explain himself fully to Margaret, and ask her to marry him; but I have known men sneak out of an engagement far more binding than the silently accepted confessions of Mr. Cassilis Forrester."

Pleasance was silent. She would not contradict her friend, though she believed that her opinion was tinged by the gloom of her coming dissolution. Mrs. Heathdale, how-

ever, was perfectly tranquil, and her mind was as a lake—

“In whose smooth depths the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirrored.”

She was preparing in the last days of her earthly pilgrimage to meet those dear ones from whom death had so long severed her. With regard to those to be left behind her, her thoughts dwelt with peaceful sadness on Pleasance. For that lone woman she foresaw the suffering of deep love unappreciated and disregarded. This conviction did not give her exquisite distress, for her eyes looked to the end of all things, and present sufferings seemed to her dwarfed when regarded as a prelude to the repose of an eternity of tranquillity in heaven, where the disturbing element of hope exists not, for it has expired in fruition. The end came with all the horror of an unexpected shock to Margaret and to Pleasance.

Mrs. Heathdale was found dead when the girl started from the sleep which had stolen over her, as she sat by her godmother's bedside. Mr. Peterson had said that the end might be sudden.

Sally, who had more knowledge of what was necessary than Pleasance, gave the usual orders. Mrs. Heathdale had refused to allow any but the plainest funeral, and her wishes were carried out. Indeed, Pleasance would as soon have thought of disputing the law of the land.

She expended part of the sum in placing a tablet in the parish church in memory of her friend. It was situated near one which Pleasance had formerly placed to the memory of Lieutenant Heathdale and Midshipman Petrel, briefly stating the circumstances of their death. Margaret, though she had been comforted by her mother's assurance of Mr. Forrester's constancy, grew graver and sadder as weeks went on, and there was no sign on his part of memory carried on of the past.

"If I could but think he thought of me with regret, it would be some consolation."

CHAPTER XXXI.

“On thee the tender thought shall dwell,
Each lonely scene shall thee restore.”

MARGARET avoided speaking to Mr. Knight if they met. She smiled and bowed in passing; but the pain he had inflicted in their last conversation remained and influenced her conduct, making her instinctively quicken her pace and gaze into a shop-window not to recognize him. He felt that he was sufficiently punished, for he had been proud of the privilege of addressing so beautiful a girl in public, and felt himself to be snubbed.

Pleasance felt the loss of her friend deeply. The sense of loneliness made her dodge the footsteps and follow with her eyes every movement of Margaret's. The rankling wound in the heart of the daughter made her irri-

table, and intolerant of this oppressive tenderness. The girl pined for the love of Cassilis. The devotion of the mother encompassed her around and around till she felt suffocated by it, and answered impatiently the too frequent question, "Where are you going, dear?"

"Mother, am I *non compos mentis*? am I idiotic, that you so watch me? or so vicious that I require constant supervision? Pray let me move about without question or observation."

When this impatience had been expressed, Pleasance would look at her daughter with a plaintive pleading in her eyes, and hold her peace. She used, after these bursts, when Margaret returned to the house, to restrain the impulse which would have prompted her to run to meet her and fling her arms round her neck with delight that her daughter had returned. Margaret, repentant for the exhibition of her irritability, would bring home sometimes sweet biscuits, sometimes a couple of muffins for their tea, as a peace-offering, which Pleasance never required. If her idol would remain in her sight, and consent to be worshipped, she desired no more.

One Sunday she felt indisposed, and Mar-

garet went to church alone. The pew-opener, seeing Mrs. Petrel's seat vacant, put a strange lady in her place, followed by a boy thirteen or fourteen years of age. When the hymn was sung, Margaret politely gave her book to the lady, and her mother's hymn-book to the little boy.

The lady, who was exceedingly struck by the appearance of Margaret, turned to the title page with an appearance of carelessness before she put down the book, and read, "Margaret Petrel." When the service was over and the church emptied, the stranger walked round looking at the monuments, and her eye was caught by the contrast of black and white in the newly erected tablet to Margaret Heathdale. Then she looked at the next, and saw the names of the officers, of whose gallantry it was the memorial.

It seemed like a recognition of a stranger in a foreign land, this reference to her dead brother ; and her eyes filled with sudden tears whilst, with instinctive terror, she grasped the hand of her boy tighter, lest a fate so disastrous should reach him also.

For Mary Tyrie, the brewer's wife, had

come down to Plymouth to place her son, called Edgar, after his uncle, with some skilful master, by whom he was, in the course of six weeks, to receive the instruction which should have been administered in the previous six years. However, better late than never; and when the desired preceptor was found, Mary Tyrie wanted to return to her distracted family and doting husband. The eldest son was to be a brewer: the second was determined to go to sea. Nominations were then given. Mr. Tyrie obtained one for Edgar, and Mary started at once with her son to see herself for a suitable master.

Turning to see if the pew-opener was still within hearing, she pointed to the newly erected tablet, and inquired at whose expense that one had been there placed, and the one to the two naval officers also.

"That one is put up by Mrs. Petrel to "Margaret Heathdale, aged sixty-four years," said the pew-opener. "Them ladies and the young one that went out just now lived together, you see, ma'am."

"Any relationship between them?"

"Not that I know on," said the woman.

"I fancy it was just friendliness like—the husband of the one and the son of the other being living together when the officers was lost, and so they kept together for company."

"And that young lady was the daughter of the young man who was lost at sea?"

"Yes, ma'am ; she and her mamma live together in the small house standing back a little with a garden on the Esplanade."

"What kind of lady is the mother?" asked Mary, with a dim memory of bygone scandal.

"Oh ! very quiet, dresses quite plain. She that's gone was quite the lady. Such silks ! She used to rustle up the aisle in a gown that might have stood alone, 'twas so rich and stiff. Not but what Mrs. Petrel is very good to the poor ; she must go without herself, I'm thinking. But miss is always as fine as fivepence, as they say. A deal must go to pay her bills."

Mary gave a shilling to the pew-opener for her information, and walked on.

"So that is my niece — poor Edgar's daughter ! She is very like my sister Margaret, only far handsomer. What a strange resemblance there is between them—like

twins! But this girl is very superior," she added, for a favourite has no friend, and Mary was of opinion that her youngest sister had always been spoilt, and had always been too highly considered by her father and her step-mother.

"I wonder whether there would be any harm in making myself known to the girl. I need not have much to say to the mother. There was something against her; she was some low mine girl, I think. I had better write and ask Frank, or papa; probably papa would know best."

So Mary wrote, and received a characteristic reply from Mr. Petrel.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“Back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes.”

“Birchland Rectory,
“September 28th.

“DEAR MARY,

“So you are at Plymouth seeking for a master for young Edgar. Those kind of crammers are necessary now for well-regulated boys. With regard to poor Edgar, he was a gallant boy, but he made no end of a mess in marrying beneath him—taken in, no doubt, by some painted hag double his own age—some ‘sweet Poll of Plymouth.’ However, he was in luck in getting a legacy; and I have never paid a sixpence for the widow, so I have no grudge against her, or the child either. It would seem, by your account, that

there was only one. I cannot see there can be any harm in noticing the daughter, if you can keep clear of the mother. Those kind of people are of two classes;—those in whom modesty still lingers, retire from the world, and declare that they have delicate health, not thrusting themselves to the fore; the arrogant ones try to brazen out the disgrace, and, if they have sufficient money, this plan often carries them into society at a rush.

“As far as I am concerned, my dear Mary, do as you please. I was always fond of your poor brother, and made many sacrifices for his benefit. He was quite aware of it, and ever preferred me to your mother, which was not to be wondered at. Though no doubt she is a saint in heaven now, she was somewhat peevish on earth.

“I hear that coxcomb, young Forrester, is gone off to the continent, to console himself for the delay in the entertainment. Were I Seaward, I should be content in his absence, and in that of his mother’s also, had I so fine a legacy to console me. I wish you good luck with young Edgar, but, if he cannot pass, remember that the sea has been an un-

friendly element to our family. I saw Tyrie yesterday, looking, I thought, more jolly than befitted one separated from his better half. These short absences, if rare, are beneficial. You had better, however, not remain too long away—men have such a disagreeable knack of consoling themselves.

“Your affectionate Father,
“J. PETREL”

On the following day Mary went to a circulating library, of which half the shop was given to books, the rest to stationery. Mary found herself dull at the hotel, and wanted some novels. As she entered the shop she found it occupied by several ladies, and in one of them she recognized the new black mourning silk and crisp crape of Margaret's dress ; at some distance was a lady whose mourning was evidently not of recent purchase : indeed, Mary thought it shabby. The exceeding beauty and refinement of the wearer struck her, as well as the sadness of the lady's expression. The idea of her being the mother of the blooming beauty who was purchasing black-edged paper at the counter would have

seemed incredible, had the fact been asserted. "Here is Miss Margaret all alone," she thought; and, when Margaret declined the proposition of the shopman to send the parcel, and Margaret was going to the opposite side, Mrs. Tyrie went forward for a novel, and addressed Margaret as miss.

"Yes?" Margaret replied quietly, and by no means discomposed, for, since the celebrated entertainment given by Madame, she had found that many persons knew her of whom she knew nothing.

"You must forgive my addressing you," said Mary, "for I wish to introduce my little boy to your notice." Then, sinking her voice to a whisper, she said, "he is Edgar Tyrie, and your cousin, and I am your Aunt Mary."

Margaret looked at the speaker very much puzzled.

"Are you sure," she said, "that you are not mistaken? I should be most flattered, I am sure, to possess an aunt and a cousin, of whom I never heard till this moment. But what proof have you of the fact?" and she looked scrutinizingly at Mary, who felt out of countenance at the investigation.

They walked to the end of the shop, and sat down for a few moments.

"Did you never hear of your father's sister Mary?"

"N-no," said Margaret; and then she added, "I have a book that was papa's at home, with Mary Petrel written in it in a childish hand."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Tyrie, "that book I gave him. There is a picture in it of a dead sailor on a rock; by this token I tried to make him beautiful, and painted his cheek vermilion. The surface was like blotting paper, and I could neither soften nor efface the 'foul spot.'"

"That is very true," replied Margaret; "and is your son called Edgar, after my father?"

"He is," said Mary, "and, like his uncle, Edgar is determined to go to sea; and I am come down here to look for some master to instruct him so that he may avoid the disgrace of failure. Do you know any one whom you could recommend?"

"I do not, but my mother may help you;" and, rising, Margaret went to her mother.

Mrs. Tyrie was rather discomposed at finding that the objectionable mother was in her presence.

As Margaret advanced towards Pleasance, the mother's face beamed over with a softening pleasure at the approach of the creature on whom she doted. Mrs. Tyrie saw the smile and the delicate flush rising over the lady's face.

"She cannot be the mother," was the passing comment in Mary's mind: "she does not look more than two or three and thirty." The sentence in her father's letter seemed to ring in her ears: "some painted hag double his age." Here was a living contradiction to that part of the statement.

"Mother!" said Margaret, utterly unconscious of the effect she was about to produce, "here is the sister of poor papa, and her little boy, who is called after him."

The face of Pleasance changed like that of a person who had received a mortal wound. Who was this woman, whom her own child was leading onwards to convict her of her past shame? Strange discordant voices rang in her ears. The rows of books in the library seemed to dance on their shelves; the floor

seemed to rise to the level of the counter. Pleasance put out her hand to cling to something tangible, and luckily grasped one of the slender pillars which supported the shop, yet her numbed hand seemed incapable of holding on to its support.

"Mamma!" are you ill?" said Margaret. "Oh, mother!" with a cry of anguish.

"It is nothing, my dear," and, with the courage of despair, she stood up, with death-like countenance, to meet what misery fate might have in store for her.

"I believe, madam, that you are the widow of my late brother," said Mrs. Tyrie, stiffly. "I took the liberty of making myself known to your daughter, whom I recognized partly by her extraordinary likeness to her father, and partly from seeing the name of Margaret Petrel in the hymn book at church last Sunday, when she kindly placed it in my hand to follow the singing."

Pleasance opened her lips, as if speaking, but no sound proceeded.

"Papa said some of these women are shy and retiring," was Mrs. Tyrie's mental observation. She went on, rather softened by the

evident distress of the person whom she had addressed, "My boy wants to be a sailor, and I have brought him down to place him with some instructor to fit him for passing his examination. Miss Petrel said that she thought you could kindly assist me."

"Yes; there is an old navy post-captain, who could advise me as to applying to some one capable of naval instruction. Indeed, he is one of the examiners. I will call on Captain Mayne before I return home," said Pleasance, rising. "Will you give me your address? I will write the name of the gentleman on a card, and send it to you by the first post." She bowed, and passed by Mrs. Tyrie, who felt somewhat worsted in the interview.

She stood awkwardly bowing in return, as Pleasance went by, when Edgar, taking Margaret's hand in his, said, "Don't go too." She looked down and smiled, thinking that her mother had been particularly ungracious in her reception of her husband's sister.

"I cannot stay now," she said. "I fear my mother is not feeling well, but I hope we shall often meet in the future."

"It shall not be my fault if we do not," said Mrs. Tyrie, kindly.

"You see," added Margaret, fancying her aunt's speech had reference to her mother's ungraciousness, "poor mamma secluded herself almost entirely after my father's death, and now losing so very dear a friend—a second mother, indeed—has intensified her love of seclusion."

"You were very much attached to Mrs. Heathdale yourself, I suppose?" said Mary, anxiously.

"Of course," said the girl. "She was so very kind, and was my godmamma; but I must run after my mother. Good-bye, Aunt Mary," she said, laughing, "I am so proud of having relations I never heard of before," and kissing her hand, she ran down the street after her mother.

Before Pleasance returned home she called on the naval officer, now risen to the rank of captain, who was her trustee.

"Put the boy into the navy, madam! Where is the use? Put him apprentice to a chimney-sweep, a better trade than being a sailor!"

"The navy is not a trade," said Pleasance, with a flush of anger on her fair face, which made the old man's eyes twinkle with satisfaction.

"Ah ! it was a grand profession once. Then there was a chance of a young fellow being able to distinguish himself. He might board an enemy's ship, and gain honour and promotion, if not wealth, but now all fighting seems to be carried on by machinery. Here I am, with two hundred a-year as the reward of a life's service. A brother-in-law of mine went into business, and spent fifteen thousand a-year till his death, when he divided a hundred and fifty thousand pounds between his family. Better stick to trade."

"I have no voice in the matter, my dear Captain Mayne ; the boy seems determined to try his chances."

"Very well, madam. Mr. Sorrel is the best man for the youngster." The Captain went to his desk and wrote the address.

Just as Mrs. Petrel had taken it, Margaret, looking more beautiful for the flush of exercise, entered the room, and apologizing to the Captain for her intrusion, said she had come

in pursuit of her mother. They left together, and Mrs. Petrel, on reaching home, sat down and wrote one of her stiff notes to Mrs. Tyrie with the utmost perfection of caligraphy, on the finest of paper, and the daintiest of envelopes and smallest of seals.

“The Small House,

“No. —, Esplanade.

“Mrs. Petrel presents her compliments to Mrs. Tyrie, and encloses the address of a gentleman whom Captain Mayne conscientiously recommends as a naval instructor for candidates for the navy. Mrs. Petrel wishes Mr. Tyrie every success in his examination.”

END OF VOL. II.

